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PRESENT-DAY PREACHING

BY

CHARLES LEWIS SLATTERY, D.D.
RECTOR OF GRACE CHURCH IN NEW YORK

NEW EDITION

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

SLIGHT changes throughout this volume give it the right to be called a second edition. They rarely change the thought, but aim at more exact expression.

The picture of the open-air pulpit of Grace Church in the City of New York symbolizes the effort to bring the news of Christ, through preaching, to the people who throng one of the great thoroughfares of the world. Here a short sermon is preached each Wednesday and Friday noon, from May to November. It was first used on June 8, 1910.

C. L. S.

Grace Church Rectory,
New York,
29 *September*, 1911

PREFACE

THIS book is the outcome of a request to deliver a course of lectures on Preaching at Berkeley Divinity School. Men who believe in preaching as one of the great forces in the world cannot be timid about multiplying hand-books. This is not a formal treatise, but the frank account of what a reasonably varied experience shows to be the practical requirements of preaching at this particular time.

As lectures these chapters were addressed to young men expecting to preach. One reason for allowing them to be printed is the hope that a sympathetic layman here and there, who cares for the Church, may have patience to read them. It would be a satisfaction to think that they might be helping any who sit in the pews to see what we who preach are trying to do.

C. L. S.

Christ Church Rectory,
Springfield, Massachusetts,
15 *September*, 1909.

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I

THE FORM OF A SERMON

I

THE FORM OF A SERMON

IT is impressive to discover that the sermon—which is often the symbol of moss-grown stability—is a perpetually changing organism. It is not surprising that we can find little to hold us in the sermons of so remote a preacher as St. John Chrysostom, or even of Jeremy Taylor. But when men complain that the sermons of John Henry Newman are prosy and the sermons of Phillips Brooks are long, we appreciate how necessary it is to relate the sermon to the exact time in which it is preached. That which seems often to the lay mind to have the same form from age to age changes even from decade to decade. Whether the world is better or worse than it was twenty years ago, is not to the point. The world is distinctly different, and that means that he who would appeal to the world to-day must frame his appeal in a form different from the greatest masters

of even twenty years ago. Preaching is the most alert of vocations.

It is often said that books of theology and religion are the first to pass. It is true. It is, however, no dishonour to them that they appeal only to their immediate time. It is rather the glory of theology and religion that they are so vital that they demand a form of expression which shall fit them into the difficulties, questions, and aspirations of the advancing years. The old Gospel is proclaimed, but it is made clear to each succeeding age by new forms and new words. Quaint phrases and lilting syllables are not sufficient for so real a thing. We demand the vernacular, plain, straight, living.

So, though the shelves of theological schools are already crowded with books on preaching, there can never be the complacent trust that the last word has been said. In each new year the preaching of the Gospel to living men must give the observant preacher who is in the practical work of the ministry a new theory of how the Gospel should be preached to show forth its joy and to produce its fruits.

1. The Text

It is somewhat strange that the "text" should persist through all changes of form. It came through Greek influence in the early Church, being an imitation of the Sophists, who were wont to base their elaborate orations on the hidden meaning of a single line of Homer. Of course expository preaching based upon a chapter of Scripture has its august example in the Lord's sermon at Nazareth when, handing back the Roll of the Prophets, He expounded the present meaning of Isaiah's words which He had just read. But most texts are not "expounded." They are rather titles, often in concrete and picturesque language, of what the sermon contains.

Probably the text will never grow obsolete. There is a dignity in its use which belongs to the realm of historic good taste—some such realm, for example, as that in which poets use metre. But to-day people are demanding two characteristics of a text. They demand that it be short; and that by the time the sermon is finished it prove its reason for being placed at the head of the sermon.

Texts have not always been short. Frederick Robertson, whose sermons remain modern—probably because we have only abstracts of them—ordinarily used long texts. Preachers in the past have rarely used less than a verse. Now, I am sure, the shorter a text can be made, and convey at the same time a clear thought, the better. It is legitimate to use a phrase, or even a single word. The word "First" makes an impressive text for a sermon on Proportion, and conveys a sharper meaning than "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God," to which of course the listener is at once warned that it belongs. The word "Remember" is a telling text for one important aspect of the sacredness of Sunday, and fixes attention as the reading of the whole Fourth Commandment could not fix it. Of phrases for texts I think of such illuminating phrases as these: "The God of hope;" "Redeeming the time;" "When it pleased God . . . to reveal his Son in me;" "Called to be saints;" "Enriched by him." Each gives a definite, though great, thought; and, cut out from its context, stimulates expectation and is at intervals a convenient refrain. Of crisp sentences for texts, these suggest them-

selves: "We are able;" "I will not" (from Nehemiah's refusal to withdraw from his work); "We beheld his glory;" "I must decrease;" "What hast thou done?" "Christ pleased not himself;" "The door was shut."

Since most earnest people like to remember a text it is well to have it so distinct and short that they can certainly remember it. Those who are not earnest may have attention aroused by a short text: they may yield themselves to what follows. For all people to-day I am quite sure that it is gain to have a text short.

The text must further have a direct connection with the sermon. People are rightly impatient with the text which is simply a formal motto hung up over a discourse with which it has no relationship. People are even more impatient with ingenious texts which are a sort of Chinese puzzle. It is part of the directness of the age that it demands that if a man wishes to preach on any subject he choose for his text the simplest and most incisive summary of that subject he can find in his Bible. Superb geniuses like Origen and Phillips Brooks may preach from such texts as "The Egyptians dead

upon the seashore," but for most men the allegorical interpretation is far-fetched, and dissipates the listener's patience. The best word which can be said of any man's text, after his sermon is finished, is that, though one had not thought of it before, it evidently means exactly what the preacher has said; and thereafter, whenever one hears that text, the lesson of the sermon fills one's heart.

The text is a time-honoured device, and it is useful. But it can only be useful if it is employed with due thought for the age. When the age is overwhelmingly busy over many things, when distractions draw men's thoughts away, then the text must be short and it must be plain. It may be an inviting doorway which careless loiterers will gladly enter. It is worth some thought.

2. The Length of Sermons

It seems almost unnecessary to say anything about the length of a sermon, because congregations have made up their minds emphatically upon this point. Any sermon is long which is dull, and an occasional

sermon may be so absorbing as to make the vestryman forget to open his watch after twenty-five minutes. But a normally good sermon gains if it is not more than twenty minutes in length. The sermon comes in its place in the service, and the whole service must be so timed as to keep the congregation fresh throughout. To make a sermon so long that the service after it is listless, is to mar the service as a whole, and so that sermon is defective, whatever may be said in praise of it by the genial parishioner.

On the other hand a sermon ought not to be too short. A good deal can be said, if words are not wasted, in fifteen minutes. But if the sermon is shorter than that it is apt to lack dignity. Edward Everett Hale has pointed out somewhere that if we wish to emphasise a certain aspect of a discourse, it is not sufficient to declare that it is the most important phase of the subject, but we must devote a certain amount of time to saying so. For people require time to mark the importance of any declaration. Every preacher has a respectful regard for the sermon; if he must not be so long as to be wearisome, neither must he be so short

as to give the impression that his task is trifling.

The ardent preacher who groans because he has but twenty minutes to enforce a profound truth, is apt to forget two facts. The first is that if he makes his sermon part of the service, the service will in its turn become part of the sermon; thus, instead of preaching for twenty minutes, he will have been preaching for more than an hour—for hymns and anthem, Psalms and Lessons, special collects and prayers, will all have given the sermon its atmosphere; they will have made it possible for the people to breathe in the encouragement or the warning of the sermon. Consciously or unconsciously, the devout listener, by sermon time, will be ready for the direct message of the preacher, and what follows the sermon will be the sacred voicing of the listener's own aspirations as awakened by the sermon. A moderately good sermon striking definitely the keynote of a unified service may send the people home refreshed and inspired.

The other fact forgotten by preachers oppressed with the shortness of present-day sermons is that the preacher is not expected

to declare the whole Gospel on any one Sunday.!! He is a teacher who conducts his congregation into the various highways and byways of the Gospel, week after week. There have been, and there are now, certain rather conspicuous preachers who seem to be telling all they know in each sermon. They can be said to have only one sermon, and that an extremely good one; but it becomes monotonous after a year or so, and the preacher is impelled to accept a call to a new set of listeners. It is no disrespect to say that some bishops fall into the way of having really but one sermon. Though they take different texts, they enforce much the same lessons at each visitation. If conscious of it, they comfort themselves, I suppose, with the thought that the congregation has not heard the sermon for a year. But when a man is set to be a preacher to one congregation, he is not nervous if he find that he has time on a given Sunday morning to say only a fragment of the truth, or even only one side of the fragment. He is a teacher, and his main duty is not to the stranger who chances to turn in as he passes the Church door. He has a real duty to

this stranger, but his main duty as a preacher is to the people whom he is leading Sunday by Sunday into the mystery and joy of the Gospel. The present Archbishop of York, when Vicar of the enormous parish of Portsea, preached, it is said, a course of sermons lasting a year on the Epistle to the Romans. The people who went to Calcutta and back, and who at either end of the voyage heard sermons on Romans, made their inevitable fling, but the regular parishioners found unusual profit in the continuous and systematic preaching. Certainly this is an extreme illustration, but it points to a general principle of high value. A congregation does not suffer if, by short sermons week by week, it builds up slowly but surely the system of Christian truth which a preacher has it in him to deliver.

There is, then, no cause for tears, because the age will not endure forty-minute sermons. He who has tears had better dry them at once. But, tears or no tears, the preacher must remember that one of the elements in a good sermon in our time is decent brevity.

3. The Written Sermon

No one can think of the form of a sermon without coming sooner or later to the question whether a written sermon is better than a sermon delivered without a manuscript. There is no doubt that most laymen like the informality and directness of what they call an *ex tempore* sermon. They are apt to say that they do not care to be preached to, they like to be talked to. The more discreet among the laity, however, prefer the written sermon, because they believe that the preacher gives them more thought and thought more fittingly expressed,—more thickness of thought, as Professor James would say. The question is largely one of the expedient contrasted with the aiming for an ideal. The man in the habit of "preaching without notes" probably diverts the chance listener; with very few exceptions, the tribe to which he belongs do not give people any deep insight into life or truth. They rest content with making sermon-time endurable to the restless and unthoughtful.

It is not wise to make general assertions about a matter into which personal talent

and genius so largely enter; but if a man finds that when he does write a sermon he cannot hold the close attention of a congregation, he must feel himself an inferior preacher, however his *ex tempore* utterances may startle and thrill. For, if he is a true preacher, he must play upon the will through thought: the easier tricks of oratory which sometimes kindle the emotions are subordinate qualities.

It is certainly a bore to hear a written sermon merely read. There is no excuse for that: it is preposterous. It is as if one were to speak of a tune's being read. As tunes are to be sung, so sermons are to be preached. As one can look at a score of music and sing, so one can look at a manuscript and preach. A written sermon ought to be preached with so much fire and freedom that the blind parishioner cannot tell whether the preacher has a manuscript or not. It is perfectly possible that written sermons should so be preached. When a written sermon is merely read—read as if it were of no importance, impassively, sometimes even stumblingly, with never a glance at the people, with no note of appeal in the voice—then it

may be an essay, or anything else under the sun, but it is not a sermon.

I think I see a movement toward the written sermon. The age that demands short sermons will sooner or later demand sermons in which words are not wasted. The sermon made up of anecdotes may be easy to listen to, but its sloppiness is evident to all but the shallowest. What is called the "anecdotal style" is perhaps the favourite style of popular *ex tempore* preachers. The man who thinks at all finds after a few Sundays under the ministrations of the "anecdotal preacher" that he is being starved. He wishes the preacher would write his sermons—and then he wonders what he could write if he should try. That layman longs for a compact written sermon; and I believe that he is a member of a rapidly growing class of laymen.

Apart from the probable gain in conciseness, the written sermon appeals to the candid laymen who is glad to believe that his clergyman is saying what he has carefully written down in the cold moments of preparation. However enthusiastic his utterance may be, the preacher is not carried away by the im-

pulse of the moment. One of the best men in the Church has confessed that he never gives himself free rein, without a manuscript before him, that he does not say something that he wishes he had not said. He rarely fails to move people: he has great power. So sacred a gift he knows ought to be exercised with scrupulous accuracy—and we also know it, if we will stop to think about it. If I believed that the written sermon could not be delivered with freedom and ardour I might hesitate to champion it; but the written sermon gives a sense of authority and judgment, which the so-called *ex tempore* sermon can rarely have. It may be an ideal beyond reach, but I believe that the Church is going to ask us to write our sermons and to preach them with as much directness as if they were not written down and lying before us.

There are times obviously when the written sermon is unsuitable. There are addresses, informal speeches, which demand the appearance as well as the form of spontaneous religious expression. No one would expect a written sermon for the crowd in Wall Street of a summer noon. But then neither would

one expect a sermon. It is a word of counsel, a talk, what some of the laity call "remarks;" a sermon is not in place.

The man, therefore, who makes it a rule to write his sermons, will not be bound by his usual method for all occasions. He will often deliver his message without note or manuscript; but when he turns to what he seriously calls preaching, he will write down the words he intends to say and he will fashion them with all the dignity and persuasion which lie within his power. The fact that a man has accustomed himself to write his sermons puts such nerve and sinew into his expression and thought that he acquires the knack of saying, as it were *ex tempore*, paragraphs which are at once thoughtful, condensed, and clear. I suppose Phillips Brooks was the best preacher of his time. There is no least doubt that his amazing power came from his stubborn habit of writing his sermons. He carried one off one's feet when he preached without a manuscript. The majesty of the rapid utterance was so wonderful as to leave one aghast at the skill of it; but every one knows now, as all guessed then, that the skill came from a

mind cultivated to the most exact and careful expression through years of continuous writing of sermons—and he found time in the last overwhelmingly busy year to add to his stock of written sermons.

The advice commonly given is that young clergymen should write their sermons. I see no reason why old ones should not write too. To stop writing seems a confession that the creative period has passed. In most clergymen's lives, so far as I can judge from my own limited observation, the creative period has passed when sermons are no longer written. Since Michelangelo dared, at seventy, to undertake St. Peter's, it is wicked for any preacher to say that he is too old to go on writing sermons.

This brings us to the chief reason for written sermons. Say what you will, written sermons are, in nearly all cases, more carefully prepared than sermons to be delivered without manuscript. The care to write down one's thoughts, the facing them in formal ink marks, the revising, the cruel cutting out of adjectives and sentences—all this is wholesome. But there is something better: the definite thinking, which is started by the

careful process of writing, produces thoughts which one had no intention of putting down at the start. These thoughts may be germane, they may be wholly irrelevant. The same thoughts might come to the man in the pulpit, but he then has no time to decide whether they will add to his general purpose or divert from it. They are, I believe, less likely to come in any form to the man simply mulling over his sermon with a few chance headings before him. It is the definiteness and sharpness of writing which sends the thought out into the nooks and crannies of the subject. The process is laborious, but it produces the effects of labour. It is actual digging,—and now and again one strikes the vein of ore.

I know that it is the habit of a few clergymen to write their sermons, to read them over carefully, and then to preach them without the manuscript. (I do not mean that they commit their sermons to memory *verbatim*. No one approves that.) This is a gain over the loose preparation of gathering up certain thoughts in one's head. But two counts may be made against the method. First, a sermon not intended to be preached

exactly is almost surely not carefully framed. It lacks precision and thoroughness. Secondly, the manuscript if rightly used is no barrier between preacher and congregation. It may give only confidence to the listener who wonders if the fervent preacher is saying exactly what he would say in moments of cold judgment.

In reading the report of the commemoration of Bishop Potter at the Century Club, I was impressed by the fact that on an occasion when ordinarily men have spoken entirely without notes, Dr. Marvin R. Vincent and Mr. Joseph H. Choate both read their speeches. Both said that the occasion demanded the carefulness and dignity of the written word. This is especially noteworthy in the case of the layman, Mr. Choate; first, because he is a layman; and then because he never fails to interest and delight, even with his most *ex tempore* utterances, in both America and England; so, if he thinks the written speech can add weight, speakers of less power ought to have searchings of heart when they despise the manuscript. One wonders if the eagerness to make listening easy for a congregation, by sermons that approach the

quality of informal talks, has not been a conspicuous element in making people believe that what the clergyman speaks about is of no vital import—simply a pleasant theory which one may reject without thought.

The written sermon should be no man's exclusive organ of expressing his religious convictions, but it should be, I am more and more convinced, the preacher's normal method. It gives, within brief compass solidity of thought; it inspires confidence, as the expression of a man's judgment; it is the means whereby a man may keep watch of his own thinking and so may be the means of constant growth. It is a means of grace for both hearer and preacher. It is moreover a means of grace for the old preacher as well as for his younger fellow. The written sermon is still the great sermon.

4. Divisions of a Sermon

The sermon of to-day must have sharp divisions. If our age is restless, and so finds it hard to be attentive to careful sermons, it is essential that they be interesting. Nothing is more interesting than growth.

The growth in a sermon must be so obvious to the listener that he can see the stages of growth. These stages of growth are the divisions of the sermon.

It used to be the habit of homiletical advisers to insist that the sermon must have a skeleton, but this skeleton must be concealed. That counsel is easily misinterpreted. In many sermons, for which the owners would maintain that there were skeletons, it would be rash to say which part held the skull and which the ankle-bones. The so-called skeleton is lost in the shapeless soft stuff which is thrown over it. It is wise now, I am sure, to say that skeletons ought to be in sermons and they ought to show. A gaunt and bony man is almost always attractive.

The Bishop of London, though perhaps, not a great preacher, is certainly an effective preacher, and the principal element in his effectiveness, after his striking personality, is the precision with which he marks the divisions of his sermons. You go away aware that he has made, let us say, four "points"—and you know what they are. The master of blunt divisions, so far as we

can tell from his sermons, as we now have them, was Frederick Robertson. He told at the start exactly by what stages he intended to mount to the climax of his subject. One likes to think that the preacher marked the definite transitions from one stage to another as plainly as they are now marked on the printed page. One feels, in reading Robertson, that in each sermon he started out frankly to do a certain spiritual and intellectual task for his congregation; and there was no pretty trick to cover up his intention. It might seem bald, were it not so intensely interesting.

I suppose that there is no question that Robertson is read more to-day than the more recent and perhaps greater Brooks. Brooks always said vital and illuminating paragraphs all through his sermons; but there was not the angular structure of Robertson's sermons, which tells of strength and growth. The sermons that people will read are some indication of what sort of sermons will help people in our day. Beauty and smoothness are less helpful than the plain climbing, step by step, to a rounded answer.

There is something to be said doubtless

for a sermon which has but a single idea. This idea may be approached from different sides, and each approach may enforce the conviction that the idea is true and is valuable. But ordinarily "the single idea" had better be kept for the short address where it has a dignified place. Then the effort should be simply to make the idea clear, and the moment the faces of the people show that they have caught the idea the address ought to stop—just as the good carpenter, pounding upon a single nail, adds not a blow after the nail is in. The real sermon ought, of course, to have a commanding idea, but this idea ought to be broken up into sections, so that people will feel that they are not perpetually coming to a point and then running off to do it again in a little different way, but that they are gradually filling the different angles of the idea with significance, so that only with the close of the sermon do they see all that the idea means—and, as always, if I may abruptly change the figure, the best wine ought to be kept till the last. For instance, in a sermon on the text, "As thy days so shall thy strength be," the preacher might begin with pointing out the satisfaction of

being aware that one is growing; then he might show how one gains the ability "to take account of stock;" this would lead to the question in what ways people can grow, and the preacher might come to his climax by showing that people ought to grow (1) in kindness, (2) in will power, (3) in consciousness of God.

The right sort of divisions for a sermon make toward the unity of a sermon. Unity implies diversity within itself. When the diversity is so arranged as to lead straight on to the centre and pith of a subject, the people go away with one thought firmly impressed on the mind. Because the divisions have helped the idea to grow in their minds, they have it there for a more or less permanent possession, however the exact words by which they won it fade from the memory. The amorphous thing called a sermon without divisions may arouse a certain flutter of passing emotion, as a bell that has been ringing for twenty minutes; but it is not likely to leave any important lesson behind. In planning a sermon, therefore, the preacher to-day will dare to run the risk of allowing his divisions to be even ludicrously evident.

It is possible to be both elegant and clear; but if a union of clearness and elegance is beyond the preacher's art, he must ruthlessly sacrifice the elegance. The people must see the divisions by which they are advancing to the best truth the preacher can give them.

5. Good English

There never has been an age when it was more important to use good English in sermons. The simple reason for this is that there never has been a time when in schools and colleges, parishioners have been so scrupulously taught the art of using English. English writing is taking a constantly larger place in instruction; and even if those who are taught may themselves write indifferently, they become, through the drill, appreciative of good English; and clumsy English jars upon them. This attention to English writing is one further token that the written sermon is to be the popular form of sermon. For parishioners so trained will have more joy in the compactness of good writing than in the directness of fluent speaking. But whether a manuscript is used or not, the

English of a sermon must be good, if the message is to be sent to the mind and heart on the lines of least resistance.

Of grossly bad English it is unnecessary to speak. But there are common mistakes of a minor order which grate upon all sensitive ears; and ears, it must be remembered, are more sensitive to-day than they ever have been before. The earlier sermons of Phillips Brooks, who was always the master of a distinguished literary style, display that abhorrent thing known to the modern student of English as the cleft infinitive. A clever preacher, in his last book of sermons, constantly starts out with "one" as the subject of his sentence, and then uses, in the same sentence, he, his, and him, referring to the same person.* A surprising number of preachers speak of what every one is doing with their money—or what not else. English preachers, usually careful, almost always tell

*It ought to be said that some modern masters of English are allowing this inelegant use, because the repetition of "one" and "one's" becomes a trifle priggish. Perhaps the safest rule is to avoid any need of repetition when "one" has been used as a subject. For longer, more involved sentences some other indefinite subject can be used; such as "a man," "people," etc.

of preventing him entering the door, or the like; and, with rare exceptions, they find how different one thing is to another. This ungainly and slip-shod English may not be especially serious, but it is below the excellence with which so high a thing as a sermon should be clothed. "Beaten oil for the sanctuary," is a good maxim for a preacher —especially when crude oil may be cause for criticism and offence.

A further warning in the use of English may be sounded in a cry for dignity in the use of words. The clergy are apt to seem irreverent to the laity by an attempt to abbreviate sacred titles or terms. I for one wish that when people speak of the Holy Communion they could allow themselves time to go beyond the abbreviated title "Celebration." To speak of a celebration of the Holy Communion is entirely proper and dignified; to speak of a "Celebration" is almost irreverent, for a celebration connotes to many people a carousal of rowdies; and when a word has been so generally cheapened, it has ceased to be worthy of being held as the single title of the great Sacrament. It is hard to protest against a term employed

by assuredly reverent men, but I comfort myself with the conviction that they would not use it if they thought. It is a contraction of a great title, and is almost coarse in its haste. We can afford time to say it all. Another contraction that is unsavoury is the word "priested," by which is meant "ordained to the priesthood." It is a professional vulgarism sounding to sensitive ears scarcely better than the unspeakable contraction of gentleman. The concise man will find time to speak of high concerns with the clean dignity which becomes them. He will avoid flippant or thoughtless contractions.

On the other hand, it is undignified almost to irreverence to use stereotyped sacred phrases with a frequency that makes them seem canting and hollow. Our Saviour is surely always our Blessed Lord, but to hear Him called "our Blessed Lord" every time He is mentioned in a sermon, with never a hush in the voice, with a rattling commonplaceness and professional hardness, is shocking. Where all adjectives fall short, the perpetual use of one adjective shows lack of feeling and discrimination, to say the least. To a Name so august the simplest noun is the highest

dignity we can pay—the reverence with which the Name is spoken tells the honour we yield to Him. Showy adjectives never can take the place of that instinctive reverence which cannot be affected, but must come from the heart. Men know it and feel it, and nothing takes its place. Emerson used to say of us, "By good taste are ye saved." He said it mockingly; but there is an element of truth in it. The man who really has good taste, not a mean ability to copy a fashion of the hour, has an innate reverence for the highest and best, and with such reverence in his heart he has within him a steady guide toward salvation. To say sacred names and words with the carefulness and honest simplicity which belong to them is a comfort to the gentle, an inspiration to the thoughtless and the uncouth.

The most important warning for the preacher of to-day, in his use of English, is that he be real in his use of words. I suppose there never was a time more impatient of sham in the religious life; men are indeed too sensitive about it, often thinking to discover it where there is only the stoutest sincerity. After a sermon is written it is

not unwise to go through it pruning out the unnecessary adjectives. Adjectives are the death of most preachers. Every adjective ought to be as the snap of a whip. Adjectives that only fill in space have power to numb the listener's ears, so that he grows deaf to the sermon. I am sure also that we had better omit the oh's and the ah's. They once had their place in virile sermons. They are now apt to sound archaic and sentimental, and therefore unreal. There are stronger ways to express scorn and regret and pain. There are time-honoured phrases such as "What avails it!" which must be crossed out whenever found; they do not sound real to-day. Occasionally a line or two of poetry may be quoted, but to avoid the suspicion of unreality, it must be only occasionally, it must be only a line or two, and it must be so apposite as to fit in with the thought. If the sentimental parishioner sighs, murmuring, "What a beautiful quotation!" then you know that you ought not to have quoted anything: you ought to have gone right on with your thought. If preaching is really good, people resent all that interrupts its progress, however fine the interruption may be in itself.

The last warning I shall give about English is to avoid patronising English. Hardly any preacher now addresses his congregation as "brethren" or "beloved." It is to be hoped that the congregation feel that they are both, but it is quite certain that they object to having the old forms thown at them. These words have been used till they are no longer recognised as bearing any real meaning. They have a stately place in Archbishop Cranmer's English in the Prayer-Book: they do not belong in a Twentieth Century sermon. The attempt to bridge the times and to find some suitable form of address leads many preachers to say at frequent intervals, "My dear friends." Now the word "friend" is a sacred word, and means the love that comes with intimacy. A rector who has served a parish for several years, going in and out among the people, sharing their joys and sorrows, knowing and respecting his parishioners as firm friends, may occasionally like to stop a moment in his sermon before he says something of especial weight, and say, "My dear friends." Because he has not cheapened the words with loose repetition, the people will feel their reality, and they

will be glad to look up at him with the answer of friendship in their eyes. That is beautiful and true. But when the stranger, and sometimes the rather oppressive stranger, addresses a congregation as "My dear friends," those who are listening either smile or shudder.

There is really no reason why a preacher should call the congregation anything. If he feels that there is some doubt whether they are there or not, he might safely address them as "Men and women"—which is plain and exact. Since the time for preaching is none too long, and since the exhortation has summoned them already to attention, it is by all means superfluous and wasteful to use any form of address in the course of the sermon. In any case the tone of patronising condescension which ordinarily accompanies the "dear friends" passages is a hindrance to the effect of the sermon. Here, as in all the English of a sermon, there must be the simple sincerity which proclaims absolute reality. A disagreeable trick of an occasional preacher is to say "You and I" to the congregation,—as if he were Lazarus speaking across the gulf to Dives.

The demand for simplicity is distinctively

a modern demand. Not many years ago the Pastoral Letter of the House of Bishops was written by a prelate who thirty years ago was counted one of the most effective preachers of the country. His position and fine Christian character gave weight to the short addresses he was wont to make in later life; but this Pastoral Letter he felt to be worthy of his best efforts: it must be a great sermon. The result was that he brought into it the cumbersome and stilted style of his past; and, because of this atrocious style, many clergymen evaded their duty, and did not read it from their pulpits. Nearly all, I suppose, took liberties with its pompous sentences. I remember meeting that fall a young clergyman for whose ability I had respect. I asked him if he had yet read the Bishops' Pastoral Letter to his congregation. "Oh, yes," he answered, "I read it. But I rewrote it first." Nothing could show more plainly the necessity of moulding the sermon of to-day in the form of the most straightforward English.

6. The Pulpit

One cannot think of the form of a sermon without thinking of the place from which it is delivered. The pulpit, therefore, becomes an important element in a sermon. If it cannot make a poor sermon good, it can often make a good sermon worthless.

The first mark of a suitable pulpit is that it be so placed that from it a preacher can be heard. A pulpit from which a preacher can be heard only halfway down the Church ought instantly to be abandoned; and experiments ought to be tried with a movable, temporary pulpit till the best spot in the Church is found. If preaching is worth doing at all, it must be made to reach the ears of all the people.

Incidentally, this makes one think of the preacher's voice. A good many preachers are heard only with difficulty, though the frank advice of an expert, patiently followed, would serve to send their voices to every corner of a Church. The voice is too often despised, because a few artificial or empty-headed preachers have little else to commend them. Harsh, nasal, throaty, or mushy voices

too often keep excellent sermons bound in fetters, so that they cannot get forth even to the ears of the people, to say nothing of their minds and hearts. It is humiliating perhaps to go in search of instruction in a matter so elementary, after a man has been preaching, let us say, ten or fifteen years; but it is a sort of humility which does much to build up the Kingdom. It is disheartening to find how many laymen cannot hear what their rectors say. The spaces and witchery of architecture are quite likely to deserve blame; but in almost all cases the preacher could so drill his voice as to offset most of the architectural defects. There are distinguished men in the Church to-day, who, finding their voices less than adequate, have put themselves to school again, and, in winter attics or in summer woods, have gone through absurd exercises till they were able to make even those who were rather deaf hear the Gospel preached—and that without shouting, without any apparent effort. The pulpit is important, but it can not be so miraculously builded as to allow a preacher to be careless of his voice.

The symbolism of a pulpit is important.

I suppose the worst preaching was heard in the Church in those years when vandals were removing the old wine-glass pulpits from our Colonial Churches, and these same vandals who perpetrated the crime began to preach their sermonettes at the lectern. Preaching became only a little less bad when the age of brass pulpits set in. To-day, when preaching is generally improving, we are having in many Churches pulpits of substantial dignity and beauty, carved by master-workmen in wood or stone. The sermon, surrounded with honour in this external way, takes new courage. It rises to be worthy of the symbolism of the pulpit, whose mute eloquence proclaims the nobility of the sermon.

Nor should we be forgetful of details. There is a pulpit in Connecticut, I am told, which has carved about it in great letters, "He giveth His Beloved Sleep." That is a beautiful text, and has a depth of pathos and consolation; but it would take an unusually stirring sermon to subdue the light emotions of the stranger, even if quite sober-minded, who first caught sight of that inscription beneath the preacher's gestures.

There is a pulpit in Massachusetts, which has upon the newel of the pulpit stairs the figure of a monk making grimaces and shaking his fist at another scowling figure on the stairs leading to the lectern. The carving is exquisite, but I am told by parishioners that when the eye, during sermon time, falls upon these two absurd figures, the mind inevitably wanders. They are too cleverly grotesque to have a place in the elaboration of a pulpit, even if they have any place in a modern Church.

The size of a pulpit ought to be in proportion to the Church. A great Church with an insignificant pulpit presents a sort of insult to the office of preaching. In a more petulant time certain bitter folk made their protest against that part of Christendom which reduced worship to shreds that the sermon might be all in all. This protest came in denunciation, first; then in neglect to make any preparation for sermons; and finally, in making the place where the poor quasi-sermons were delivered as meagre as possible. This silly protest has, I am sure, quite passed. I remember hearing Bishop Brooks tell once how Bishop Coxe came to

spend Sunday with him in order to preach in Trinity Church. Saturday afternoon Dr. Brooks took the Bishop to the Church that he might adapt himself to the surroundings beforehand. After looking about and adversely criticising nearly everything, Bishop Coxe's eye fell upon the pulpit. "Brooks," he said enthusiastically, "I like that pulpit. It is big and it stands up and out with command. And, Brooks," he continued, "I like your going out to take off your surplice and to put on your black gown. When you have gone to all that trouble and have changed your clothes, and have climbed up into that great pulpit, you've *got* to do something, haven't you?" Then there came a look of scorn into his fine old face, as he went on, "As for these fellows who simply walk over to a music stand—it's no wonder they can't preach!"

When all is said about the form of a sermon, it must be confessed that it is only a form. The real sermon lies behind, and when it springs to the lips of one born a preacher, all conventions and forms may be cast to the winds, and the sermon may

yet go to its mark in the hearts of those who hear. Neither, on the other hand, do excellent forms of casting a sermon atone for any lack of real preaching. For a sermon is a sermon, not an essay or a poem or a work of art. A sermon is strangely alive, and if something be adorned in due sermon-form, with all possible balance and proportion, and yet lack the spark of life, it is, however beautiful, a dead thing and no sermon. Walt Whitman, discarding all forms of poetry, was nevertheless recognised, by masters like Tennyson, as a poet. An innumerable company, able to fit line to line in excellent rhyme and metre, masters of perfect form, have no poetry to put in their beautiful casting, and so are nothing but jinglers. What is true of poetry is true of preaching. Technical skill can produce neither poem nor sermon. But when one has the poetic fire, on the one hand, or the zeal, on the other, to tell to men the best news of Christ, then the technical form is a help. The poetry is more poetry; the preaching is more preaching. It is not art for art's sake, but it is art that art may be forgotten and become the transparent, unrecognised me-

dium for making the deep and radiant reality clear to the soul of man.

May I say a word here of what is called the Invocation; that is, the announcement at the opening of a sermon that it is in the Name of the Trinity? I speak with hesitation of this use, adopted in a good many Churches, because I recognise its reverent intention, and because I am quite sure that it has tended to exalt the sermon to a higher place than it otherwise might have attained. In so far, we may be thankful for it. But now the question arises whether it has not served its purpose, and may not wisely be exchanged for a prayer. To a sensitive preacher it seems presumptuous; since, not being prescribed by rubric or other authority, and having behind it no ancient precedent,* it smacks of individualism, and further must appear to thoughtful and candid laymen, as a Bishop of Connecticut once said, a much too imposing porch for the insignificant edifice behind it. It over-exalts the sermon, giving it a

* For a convenient summary of ancient usage, see Bingham's Antiquities, Bk. xiv, Ch. iv, §§ 13, 14, 16. Both a prayer before the sermon and an ascription to the Trinity at the close are venerable customs.

quite sacramental character. There are times when it might be used with discrimination and fineness of feeling—when, for example, a bishop delivers his triennial charge upon a subject on which he feels that he must speak, by divine direction; or when a parish priest has been brooding over some civic wrong and feels that he must say what the God of right tells him to say—occasions which do come to the true prophet when he is altogether sure that he speaks for God, and dares to say so,—such occasions as came to Hebrew preachers when they said, "Thus saith the Lord." We Americans tend to overuse superlative forms and phrases, dulling their meaning for supreme needs. For most Sundays, I venture to think, the moment before the sermon can be more appropriately used than by this high announcement. The people, as well as the preacher, need to remember that the sermon is a great responsibility for both, that as the preacher needs grace to speak what God would have him speak, so the people need grace to hear with forbearance, with patient receptiveness. To be quite definite, I plead that sermons begin with the ancient collect for the Nineteenth

Sunday after Trinity: "O God, forasmuch as without thee we are not able to please thee, Mercifully grant that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts, through Jesus Christ our Lord." And may the people say with a real prayer for the preacher, "Amen." He needs that prayer.*

* There is a use of dignity and antiquity surviving in certain churches of England and Scotland which deserves mention. The preacher standing in the pulpit addresses the people with the venerable salutation, "The Lord be with you," to which the people, still standing, reply, "And with thy Spirit." No one hears the words thus used for the first time without recognizing the appropriateness and beauty of the custom.

II

ACQUIRING MATERIAL

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PROBABLY there is no vocation which so graciously admits to its power all that a man has acquired as the ministry. The man whose life has had most variety, is, all other things equal, most efficient in the ministry. Time spent in learning business or law or medicine or physical science is never lost for the man who becomes at last a clergyman. Because he must touch human life, everything human becomes an avenue by which he may approach the heart and soul of life. In later years quite as in youth, it is not so much a question of *what* a man shall learn and know as that he shall always be acquiring material *of some sort.* He who preaches the Gospel to men must not only know the Gospel, he must know men too. In so far as the knowledge of either is lacking, just so far must there be failure. On the other hand to know anything well is

always capital for the preacher. Deep truths can often be made clear by the homely illustrations taken from sailing a boat, from digging in a field, from experimenting in a laboratory. The preacher stands in awe before all knowledge because through it he learns the heart of man.

This does not mean that one shall parade what one knows. The preposterous thing known by the bewildered people as "a scholarly sermon,"—which means among other things that it is intolerably dull,—is happily passing, if it is not indeed quite past. Since a sermon is meant to get at the mind, the intelligence, of the congregation, it is of first importance that it be simple, easy to understand. It was said of John Eliot, the Apostle to the Indians, that though elephants could swim in his discourses, lambs could wade in them. Profound truth, if thought out, will ordinarily become clear. The human mind is limited, and some things we can understand only a little. But it is sophomoric to think that obscurity is a sign of thought. The man who has the most abundant material and the clearest insight is frequently the man of the simplest utterance. One

can get no better example of this than in the printed sermons of Dean Church, of St. Paul's, who lived the life of a student. Simple as these sermons are, one discovers in them always the exact statement which reveals wide knowledge of philosophy and theology.

It used to be the habit of certain preachers to quote Hebrew and Greek in their sermons. It is not unwise to speak of the original meaning of a word, but it is a gaudy parade of what is apt to be superficial learning, to read a sentence to the people from any language but English. I remember hearing a theological student, preaching on Hope, taking his text from a verse in the Psalms. "I wish to remind you, brethren," he said, "of the comforting thought that the verb 'hope' in this passage is in the preterit Qăl." The absurdity of this information for the ordinary congregation is sometimes matched by equally irrelevant information on other subjects,—allowed to remain irrelevant because the preacher is too indolent or too stupid to translate it to intelligible terms. Our discourse ought, in places at least, to be, as John Eliot's, deep enough for elephants to swim in it, but lambs ought to be happy always in their wading.

It is easy to know enough to make a show of learning; it is hard work to know enough to communicate ideas of real value to men of different minds. I therefore ask you to contemplate several methods by which the preacher may acquire sufficient material. For it is plain that if sermons are to be respected they must have genuine material behind them.

1. Systematic Study

It is commonplace to say that the man who is not willing to preach himself out in a year or two, must pursue systematic study. Commonplace as it is, it must be said again and again. Two objections come to the active young clergyman. The first is that the man of his acquaintance who studies and reads most is a dry-as-dust pedant. He knows an amazing array of facts, he can recognise and name heresies if he sees but the corner of them, he can give the derivation of all the unusual words in the language, he corrects you in your pronunciation of names, indeed he is as accurate as a dictionary and more voluminous than the Britannica—but every one yawns when he begins to talk.

"Of what use, then," says the successful younger brother, "is this learning, if it produces nothing but bores?" The other objection is more practical: "When I have done my calling," says the rector, "and written my sermons, and organised my guilds, and gathered up my boys, and conferred with architects and builders, and pleaded with rich men who can support my charities, there is time left only for eating and sleeping." There is of course the rule that one may adopt, namely, to keep one's mornings apart for reading and study,—but the interruptions for a man who is at the beck and call of his people are legion. Shall one drop a real service to men for the chance of accumulating learning, and run the risk of being an insufferable bore at the last?

It is a difficult task to study in a time when the Church, whether wisely or foolishly, is all agog with organisation. But preaching, to be more than clap-trap and noise, must come from solid acquisition. Study must find room, but it must be of so practical a nature as to elbow its way into the practical life of a modern pastor. I have then two practical suggestions to make.

The first suggestion is that the preacher have a mid-week Bible Class to which he shall invite the most thoughtful people in the town who are willing to come. These people may be both within and without his own flock. Then he must take up with them a definite subject and prepare to do it thoroughly. He may spend two years, for example, on the First Book of Samuel; or he may spend seven or eight years on The Life of Christ; or he may begin with them the study of Church History. The man who teaches must know. If the keen school-teachers come to his class,—and probably they will come,—he finds that he will have to verify his assertions. They listen; they are awakened to read; they do read. They will ask him suddenly if he is sure that Charles VIII came down into Italy at just this time. Well, when all is told, this religious instruction, given informally, of a week-day, will spur the parson to accumulate accurate learning, and he will find his practical conscience quiet, for has he not added another organisation to his list?

To be more definite, let us imagine that the study for the year is a small section of

The Life of our Lord. Let us suppose that it is Wednesday morning and the rector is seating himself to the preparation for the evening class. He will first go over the lesson in his harmony, taking St. Mark for the basis of his narrative. He will compare the other Synoptic accounts. Perhaps a section of St. John will come in. He will then pull down his commentaries to make sure of the interpretation of obscure passages. He will thus dip into the new International Commentary on St. Matthew, reading it for the first time for a practical purpose. He will then turn to Hastings's Dictionaries for the description of the Hebrew feast mentioned, or of the Sanhedrin, or of Jewish customs of burial. He will turn to the Encyclopædia Biblica to get the more radical view of the whole passage. He will find angels mentioned; he recalls that he saw in Sanday's book on The Life of Christ in Recent Research a sermon on angels,—this is the time to read it. He does so. He recalls also an article in a recent Expositor bearing on the lesson,—he reads that too. So I might go on to describe the natural process which any well-trained man would devise to equip

himself for his class instruction. But I have indicated, I hope, sufficiently, to show how the man is acquiring material old and new, to be used at once for a definite, practical purpose, and also to be stored away in his mind for a permanent possession. For years he will have this knowledge, growing week by week, keeping pace with new discoveries and new interpretations, and from it he will inevitably draw as from a reservoir of living water. Having adjusted facts to living conditions, he will always have power in his preaching to interest and to edify.

The other practical suggestion is to make a study of some great doctrine or phase of religious life. This the preacher will write out at length, clearing way for all possible details. Having this subject in mind, he will be constantly adding notes to his manuscript; often he will be crossing out whole pages. His reading will lead him curiously to discover what others have thought. This manuscript he will have no intention of publishing; he will use it only to clarify his own vague ideas. He will necessarily guard himself against casting a system in his immaturity, which shall be a barrier to the

heavenly light which later study or experience may reveal to him. (This suggests a serious danger in the plan. But it can be avoided.) Through his careful, written thoughts on an abstruse theme he will have gained background for further thought on all departments of life, and there will come a certain solidity and consistency to all his sermons in consequence. It will not do merely to say that one will study on such and such lines; the writing it all down is an enormous aid toward fixing what has been read and what has been thought in consequence of the reading.

In the collection of material there are two kinds of books that the preacher ought not to read. One is the homiletical commentary; the other is the volume of sermons. A preacher should go to a commentary to find out, so far as one can, the exact meaning of a word or a passage,—and for nothing else whatever. If homiletical commentaries have any place in the world, they are for devout lay people who cannot go to Church and prefer exegetical preaching for their sermon reading. The sermons of the masters should be read by preachers for the form and for

personal inspiration. They must not be read for material: for the reader will either, if unscrupulous, copy in slightly different words what he finds there, or, if an honest man, will be embarrassed to find his own lesser thinking constantly rebuked by the master's which he dare not borrow—or steal. It is the same principle by which novelists, I am told, do not read other people's stories, though they read all other books. For all reasons a man must not go about acquiring material to write just one sermon; therefore let him have nothing to do with the homiletical commentary, and let him fall to reading the great sermons of others only when he feels that he needs the opportunity to sit under some preacher and have his soul kindled to new fire,—when he needs, as it were, to go to Church and hear a sermon.

The man who teaches a Bible Class of mature minds and who writes what for convenience we may call a confidential treatise on some branch of theological learning, is apt to acquire valuable material, and this material will probably be so related in his mind as to be of practical value in his work as a preacher. He will not be a collector of

miscellaneous information. He will be a student. To some extent, at least, he will be a scholar.

2. Summer Reading

So far I have said nothing about the thorough-going reading of great books from beginning to end, to find out, as it were, the whole mind of a man, to discover his system. To read the biography and then the whole list of books of a conspicuous leader in the Church, remote or recent, is very profitable. Thus to come to intimate terms with St. Augustine, with Jeremy Taylor, with Newman, or with Maurice, is to add large resources to one's stock of material. Besides, there are voluminous books which one rightly keeps upon one's conscience till they are read through,—Gibbon's Rome, Creighton's History of the Papacy, Lightfoot's Apostolic Fathers, Dorner's Person of Christ. They *can* be read in the snatches of time saved from one's more immediate study arising from the exigencies of the week's work. But they *need* freedom and space. Therefore, I suggest that the collective reading of all the books of one man, such as Maurice, or the reading of a

long book, like Gibbon's Rome, be set apart as the chief task of a summer.

The summer has a valuable place in the economy of a parson's time. If his work is strenuous during the winter, he usually takes a holiday of two months; if he is a curate and has a shorter holiday, he has decidedly less to do in the summer than in the rest of the year. Generally, a clergyman has in summer much time which he can give to uninterrupted reading. He should keep a list of the books which it seems to him he would like to read in the summer, books which it may be impossible for him to read in the winter: a new book by Harnack, a new book of philosophy by Royce or James, two or three biographies that have come out during the year, a new book by Gore or Sanday; but among these more recent and perhaps ephemeral books there should be some long book, proved great by the test of time, to be studied in the gay quiet of summer mornings under the trees when all is peace and there are no distractions. This is to store away fuel which, during the following winter, can be kindled to flame by the spark of necessity.

At all times it is wise to keep a note-book when reading, but at no time is it so good to have a note-book as in the leisurely days of the summer vacation. In this note-book it is profitable to copy a half page that is particularly striking; the mere trouble of writing it down tends to fix it in the memory. Here too it is wise to jot down a happy illustration which one finds—more often than not, merely suggested by the reading—but the reading has helped to construct it in the mind, and there it is. It ought to be put down definitely for future use. So also this note-book may receive telling words and phrases, which the keeper of the note-book is conscious that he fails to use. People who talk much must be on constant guard lest they over-use certain words. People who write with care have more chance of testing their vocabulary. I remember in my college days a really admirable preacher who never conducted a service, so far as I can recall, without speaking of "the privileges and opportunities of a new day." He ought to have kept a note-book to discover how Stevenson or Macaulay or some other master of phrases would have expressed that

same idea, provided he must say it every day.

The layman often envies the rector his long holiday, and sometimes scoffs at what he believes a needless self-indulgence of rest. Some clergymen even become sensitive about it and wonder if perhaps they are not away an undue amount of time. I trust that no criticism and no misunderstanding will ever prevent the busy pastor of a large flock from withdrawing for at least two months from the routine; therein he may give himself up to such constructive work as would be impossible within home limits. For as long as the rector of a parish is within the bounds of his parish he is perpetually thinking what he ought to be doing this moment and that for one and another of his parishioners. It it is only when he is so far away that he knows that he cannot go to them within half an hour that he is really at peace. It is the instinct of a true pastor, and he is of small use in the ministry who does not have it. But it is so intense a quality that it must be given its periods of rest. It is unfair to both priest and people if he who serves is not kept fresh and buoyant, that his service may give hope

and cheer always. The idea of rest, however, is only half the story. This period of freedom from routine is the supreme period of the year for laying in a rich store of intellectual and spiritual power. It is the time to read great books and to reflect upon them. A man who will so use his two months' holiday will do in ten months what he could not possibly have done in twelve.

3. Current Thought

These days are days of rapid discovery in realms of thought as well as in the material world. Forty years ago the method known as higher criticism was feared or despised by nearly all religious people. To-day the method is recognised as not only legitimate but necessary by all schools of thought, however conservative. This is not to say that the results of all higher criticism are approved; that is impossible, for the results are as varied as the temperaments of men. But the method as a method has practically the universal approval of the religious world. That is an amazing accomplishment for

forty years, quite as wonderful in its way as the accomplishments of electricity and modern surgery.

Now it behooves the clergyman to watch the progress of such movements, and not to be swept along with the tide, having given the subject no individual judgment. Sermons are not for the exposition of the method of higher criticism, but sermons ought to bear some solution to the men and women who are excited and disturbed by the clamour which such a new method arouses. A doctor need not describe to his patient the modern theories and postulates of bacteriology, but the patient would have an uncomfortable distrust of the physician who, he suspected, knew nothing whatever of bacteriology. The preacher to give thoughtful listeners confidence must be a man who keeps abreast of the thought of his time. There must be the feeling always when the preacher utters his words of confidence, "Well, he is sure of that,—and I know that he knows all that scepticism and materialism can say against it."

I have suggested higher criticism as one of the notable changes in thought. A little before higher criticism came evolution; and Bishop

Wilberforce, being an orator but not a thoughtful person, made himself ridiculous, because he did not inform himself of the most conspicuous drift of his age. Now the hypothesis of evolution, so far from being called atheistic, is made one of the bulwarks of the argument from design. To-day, it may be, we are entering a period when the Society for Psychical Research will have valid news, however slight, to give us of the other world. A good many philosophers and theologians are looking upon the movement with a sort of contempt. That is not the attitude for the Christian thinker to take. He must leave the subject to trained investigation; he may not do anything, as a tyro, but wait for their verdict. He must, however, give the whole movement his sympathetic attention, and he must keep watch over the careful reports as they come to public print little by little. Possibly his prejudices against it may prove well-founded. That does not matter. He must have patience till the end is clear. There are also discoveries in geography, such as Ramsay has made in Asia Minor, changing our conception of Galatians; and, through the knowledge of ancient Tarsus, giving us

some idea of the fellow-citizens of St. Paul, because they and their ancestors overcame grave obstacles in the founding and perpetuation of their town. There are discoveries in old manuscripts and versions of the Bible. Fragmentary as these discoveries are apt to be, they are sufficiently important to be worth knowing as soon as they are announced. These are all such things as the preacher who is alive to the dignity of his task will wish to know. His preaching, to be vital, must have such knowledge in the background of his sermons. He will not permit his brother in medicine to outdo him in zeal for knowledge.

How may one keep oneself posted upon such subjects? First, it is wise to take two or three technical journals. It is more than wise, it is necessary. The young physician does not, I think, plead poverty, when he asks whether he shall have certain medical journals upon his desk. Nothing should deter the clergyman from a like ardour for knowledge. These journals may include such magazines as The Expositor, The Expository Times, The Hibbert Journal, The American Journal of Theology, and the London Guar-

dian. At least two of these should be taken and thoroughly read. Especially should the reviews be read. Occasionally the review of a good book will be sufficiently full to give one all that one needs; often it will point to a book which is evidently worth reading for oneself. This book should be bought at once; or, if that is beyond one's purse, it should be secured for the public library, and then borrowed from it.

This leads me to a slight digression. Clergymen often complain that they are cut off from new theological books. It is almost sure to be their own fault if they are. For public libraries are nearly always willing to get books suggested by the clergy. This is both just and discreet. For the book that attracts one clergyman of a town is most likely to be attractive to the other ministers. If these men, who do more than any other band of men to mould wholesome thought, can help the community on, by a book which they alone read, is not that book worth more to the town than a novel or so, which though read by five hundred, leaves no appreciable impression? I believe librarians and library committees have that point of view in the main. The watchful

parson may read the new theological books if he will ask for them.

Among those books which ought to interest all preachers are the books that indicate the growth of the discussion on the Fourth Gospel, displaying all phases, from Schmiedel to Sanday; the trend of historical investigation touching upon the early Church, such as books by Harnack in Germany, or Gwatkin in England; the modernist movement in the Church of Rome, with its expositors within and without, sympathetic and hostile; the books of constructive and spiritual thought such as Inge and Illingworth are apt to send out from time to time. Each man will naturally have his preferences, and that is right. The proportion will vary with tastes and capacities. But all men ought to be interested in some of these departments, and all ought to be more or less posted as the months go by.

The preacher has the superb task of illuminating the truth so that it may appeal to the minds and hearts of his day. To give light he must get light. He must open his own mind to receive all the light which scholars are receiving, through a consecrated devotion to the truth, from the God of truth.

4. Books as Friends

In acquiring material for preaching from books it is essential to remember that preaching to be alive must pass from the technical up into life. What we call literature in its broad sense is peculiarly endowed with power to make alive, because, being literature, it inevitably proceeds from life. Under the veil of poetry and essay and tale we are looking at life—human experience portrayed with the clearness and strength of the master and the artist, as only the master and the artist can portray it. As we read, perhaps for pleasure, we are seized with the conviction of what an overwhelming place the world is,—not the world of time and space, but the world of men's doubts and fears and sacrifices and loves. It is an infinite thing, and literature admits us to certain remote regions of it, which unaided we might never discover. We never shall know life altogether, but we must know as much as we can of it,—if we really wish to help the varied characters of men and women about us. In a love of literature as such we have a delightful way to enlarge our horizon: we may see

life going out into spaces which yesterday we thought to be the vacuum of death.

As you pass through a village you may come upon a gloomy man who is said to be rector of the parish there. You introduce yourself, and he soon falls to complaining that he has no congenial friends in the community, excellent as his parishioners are. He longs for some intellectual stimulus. He wishes for some one whose talk could dovetail in with his own on exalted subjects. There is bitterness as well as sadness in this poor fellow's tone; and you wonder how the bright news of Christ can be given by such a morose and unhappy person. Then there must come to you an idea. Why, you ask yourself, should this clergyman be lonely when he can have most wonderful friends by going into his study and taking down this book and that. Old friends are there, and new ones (uncut edges, alas!) to be discovered. What folly that he should be moping and fretting when he may go to see Henry Esmond and renew a real friendship with that solid and heroic soul. That will bring him inevitably into Lady Castlewood's society, and her gentleness will give him rest and peace.

Beatrix too he will meet again, and she will vex even while she bewitches him. He will go out for a walk after an hour spent in such company, with a gleam in his eye and a spring in his step, which will make the people nod to one another and say, "Parson is a deal more lively than he was yesterday." Or, suppose it is Martin Chuzzlewit to whom he flees. He leaves Martin, after a few affectionate revivings of his memory, and goes to sit for a time in Sairey Gamp's cluttered room, to hear her chatter with Betsey Prig; to munch perhaps a bit of lettuce which Betsey produces from her pocket; and to sniff the teapot as Sairey "propoges a toast." Some way the characters one knows in books mingle with a singular familiarity among the present people of flesh and blood. Yes, they are real. The way of having friends is evident even in a monotonous Western junction.

What a host of these friendly books there is when once you begin to think them over. There are Scott's stories with their chivalrous knights and beautiful ladies,—stories which John Henry Newman, when a boy, liked to put under his pillow that he might wake earlier than usual to renew in the early morn-

ing a delightful friendship with Amy Robsart, or Waverley, or Quentin Durward. Then there is Knickerbocker with his Wouter Von Twiller and his Hardkoppig Peter, and his horrible battle lines enveloped in smoke, which pleasantly turn out to be rows of agreeable Dutchmen, trudging manfully forward, "smoking their pipes with outrageous vigour," and "marching exceedingly slow, being short of leg, and of great rotundity in the belt." There are the mystical stories of Hawthorne with their weirdly humorous people; and there are the essays of the blessed Charles Lamb; and there is Coleridge with his Christabel and his Ancient Mariner. Friends are they all—and such friends! The crowded city rector wishes that he had a country cure that he might visit these leisurely folk in his books more regularly. They get horribly neglected in the smoky town. Happy is the man who learns the strength and the charm of such companionships.

But the whole tale is not told, nor the half of it, when you say that such friendship in books makes a man happy. It vastly enlarges his capacity for usefulness. This usefulness is expressed in two ways. First,

it gives a man range and dignity, showing him that the world called real is only part of the world that really exists. There is an enticing region which a man can reach only by imagination. Further, the friendship of fine books creates an atmosphere where generous qualities are contagious. Enlarged conceptions of truth and duty come from the cultivation of a taste for literature. It is needless to say that such enlarged conceptions are staunch aids to a preacher's power.

The cultivation of the imagination marks always the transition from the commonplace to the noble. Whether a man be architect, doctor, lawyer, or preacher, he must have imagination to pass beyond the useless. Think of the physician. He always brings two sorts of medicines: one kind is in box or bottle; the other is unseen, intangible: it is the confidence and hope which the skilful doctor is always careful to transmit to his patient. The pills and the lotions are as nothing compared with this unseen medicine, which no box or bottle can contain. How does the doctor comprehend the mood of his patient, so that he can by a touch, a glance, a word, transmit the vital fluid of

hope? Evidently he puts himself into his patient's position. He thinks how the patient feels, and when he feels as if he were the patient, he rather thinks that he will feel better. There is an alert sympathy between physician and patient by which the patient receives health from the doctor's superabundance. It is imagination in its last analysis that makes a successful physician.

Now how does he get it? It would be nonsense to say that he receives it only through books, but it is certain that he may so receive it, and it is equally certain that he does so receive it again and again. No man can read Shakespeare with sympathy and not be the keener observer of human nature. The physician reads, and as he reads, he cries: "There is the analysis of the very man I am visiting day after day. Now I see into him. To-morrow I shall start his mind in a new direction and that will help him to get well." Malvolio and Portia and Shylock and Romeo and Olivia and Ophelia—they are the deeper interpretation of the people who live in the doctor's street. He laughs and groans over these people in the book; he discovers the springs of sorrow and pain;

and he goes out of his door with a new estimate of the patients he serves: they are bones and nerves and muscles just as they were before; but there is a new element added—they are Malvolios and Ophelias and Romeos and Portias. The knife cuts truer, the drugs assimilate more quickly, because the doctor knows his patient through and through. By a genuine friendship for books such genius may be brought to its power.

Take another illustration. Let this be from the law. It is said that the chief reason why Abraham Lincoln won his cases was because he was scrupulously careful to state all the arguments an opponent would be likely to use. Before pleading his own side of the question he made a brief for the other side. When he was done the other lawyer rose with chagrin to ramble through the arguments Lincoln had already brought forth and refuted: Lincoln had stolen all his thunder. Only a man with a wonderful imagination could so completely have put himself in the position of his opponent. The really great lawyer always has imagination. Because he knows human nature he reads deeply and on all sides; he tells the other lawyer

points for his side that he never had wit to think for himself; he discovers to the prisoner in the pen motives and impulses which the prisoner did not before know that he had, but which he now recognises as his essentially. Daniel Webster once imagined how a certain murder was committed, explained it all to the jury, and the prisoner confessed, because he saw that his deed, unseen by the eyes of any man, had been revealed, detail by detail, to Webster's imagination.

The imagination that makes the lawyer great is the same subtle quality that makes the physician great. Though having many possible avenues of development, it may be entered through a friendship for books. It was a pitifully narrow circle of friends that Abraham Lincoln had among the books of the world. But he knew Jacob and Esau and Joseph; he knew Rachael and Deborah; he knew David and Nathan. And he knew many others. He did not know many books; but he had intimacies with many people that those few books had introduced to him. The native wit that cheered a nation during civil war was refined and enlightened through intercourse with his friendships so acquired:

the imagination, native to his soul, was quickened and became his greatness as pleader and statesman.

Now if doctors and lawyers need imagination, preachers need it still more. Above all they need to feel the infinite reaches of life; and it takes imagination to do that. Books that have become friends, because revealing the springs of action, give the pastor power to reflect upon the interior life of the people who make up his flock. Reading that most exquisite of short stories, Jackanapes, will, within the afternoon, give him power to read heroism and victory in the face of a small boy who runs by on his way from school. Reading In Memoriam, or Saul, or The Blessed Damosel, will open to him—though perhaps he himself has known no blinding sorrow—a vision of the mysterious and baffling fact of human suffering. He will be the better able to give sympathy to a friend who is in the depths of agony and loneliness. By imagination he will know the truth; by love, made more intense by imagination, he will do what he longs to do—he will help. Reading Robinson Crusoe, that old and exciting friend, he will find new comfort

in his dog and his horse—their affection and patience will be full of new wonder and delight. Reading The Vicar of Wakefield, he will question whimsically whether he may be getting somewhat queer and anxious—he will investigate himself as from without and see what sort of figure he cuts upon the street—it is well to smile and be affable, but then a parson's smile is sometimes over-benevolent. Reading Trollope, he will look over his family with some care. He will compare his wife with Mrs. Proudie, and make suggestions perhaps that will help her to avoid certain pitfalls that have snared many clergymen's wives. He will compare his garrulous son with Bertie Stanhope—and again he will drop a few hints. He may blush a little as he reads of Mr. Slope, but his blush will show that he is safe. And it will do him a world of good to know Mr. Harding quite intimately. All such friendly cultivation of books is to make him more human. He is everyway larger, sweeter, kinder, and he acquires an always widening vision.

It is quite true that a man must always be on his guard lest he preach what he has

read in a book and has not allowed to penetrate into his life. From time to time one hears from pulpits explanations of passages of Scripture which, though ingenious, are fantastic and unreal. Men stare into the preacher's face, and ask, "Does he really believe that?" and the conviction answers back in their own hearts, "No: he is so far removed from the warm life of mankind that he doesn't know what is in life." That man, you see, has read books, but he has gained no imagination from them. He is only playing with the outsides of things: men must pass him by.

There are men who are, in the pulpit and out of it, talking grandly of facts. A fact, they say with a flourish of the hand, is a fact, and that is the end of it. We cling with all our might to the facts of Christianity, but we never would say that the mere possession of those facts is enough. We must know what the facts mean. It is, for example, a fact that God sent His Son to us, and there is no greater fact in time or eternity. But the interpretation of the fact—"God so loved the world"—is the reason why the fact is supreme in our thought and affection.

Preachers must know life well enough to suspect at least what outward facts mean, especially the outward facts in our Christian faith. This process of interpretation is not a loose, individualistic process, but lies embedded in the great process of life. To interpret the inner meaning requires imagination. Blessed, then, be the friendships within old books and new, that can enliven the preacher's imagination.

It is often argued that preachers are careless and stiff in their use of the Bible. The Bible is recorded by poets and prophets, as well as by business-like, matter-of-fact people. If the preacher does not know the poets of his age, men like Tennyson and Matthew Arnold and Browning, it will be natural if he reads Hebrew poetry as if it were shop-keeper's prose. The clumsy man, good and honest as he is, will often preach lies, because he is so dense, so earth-wise, that he will din a figure of speech into his congregation as if it were a cold formula in physics. Who needs sanctified and accurate imagination as the man who preaches from the wonderful Book called the Bible!

Not enough of us read poetry. I do not

mean ballads and metrical dramas—which people are apt to read for the story—but lyrics, which sound the depths of feeling, and intimate what no words can quite say, catching music up into language and enlarging the power of utterance. The deft use of words which fine poetry teaches is not to be despised; but the supreme value of poetry is that it carries us into the hidden places of truth—it makes us feel truth which we cannot put into hard prose—we appreciate what we cannot describe. During the Queen's Jubilee Kipling's Recessional told in a few lines what libraries of prose could not have told. It took hold of people's heart-strings, and made them confess truth which only then they recognised as inevitable.

Since avowedly this is not an age of poetry, we cannot often expect to pick up the morning Times to read immortal verses. We must be content with the old poetry. There are some clergymen who do not go away for a day's jaunt without having in their pockets Palgrave's Golden Treasury or The Oxford Book of English Verse. There are others who all their lives long have had a poet for a master. The man in America who to-day

can instantly give his thought most terse and delicate expression, exact and strong, has upon his study desk a commanding cast of the head of Tennyson. Others who care little for Matthew Arnold's prose read again and again his Rugby Chapel and his Buried Life. Browning is rather a dangerous poet for preachers, because he is apt to seem too satisfying: men are prone to let him do their thinking for them, then turn his optimism into easy prose,—and stop there. The greatest poet suggests, rather than describes. Poetry has its power because it opens a man's mind to the most daring imagination. It is like seeing life from a mountain peak. The world is suddenly so vast as to be both appalling and surpassingly beautiful. It is so much more amazing than one ever dared to believe, that one is now ready to believe its wonders to be without limit. All things are possible. The world is no longer arithmetic and geography, geology and business and agriculture; it is poetry. Only to a very slight degree is the world the facts we grasp with our senses. It is for the most part the unknown, but not unknowable. It awaits discovery and love and patience. The master-

poets all along help us so to climb the heights that we may see the vision. Music and art may dull a preacher's keenness for truth. Poetry can only bring him in reverence to its fullest appreciation.

The 'literary parson' is a name sometimes given to a dilettante preacher who is always prattling of verses and tales. I am quite aware that there is such a person in the ranks of the ministry. He is apt to be superficial, astonishingly glib in quotation; but you know in two minutes that he has no deep friendship for the heroes and saints whose stories he recounts so lightly. They have not entered his imagination. The man who really has found the secret of great books is never called a 'literary parson;' no such incidental characterisation is possible. He is simply known as a man who knows men, their joys, their sorrows, their fears, their hopes. Through great spirits who have delved into the deep places of life he has learned the secrets of hearts, he has learned the greatness of life.

Better than this gift of imagination, which comes through the friendship of books, is the gift of character. No one can become

a fast friend of Colonel Newcome without unconsciously assimilating some of his lovable traits. No one can laugh with Charles Lamb without remembering the sadness that lay in the background of this brave wit. No doubt Charles Lamb had a bad habit or two. But his courage and gentleness overshadow them all. What a rebuke to self-indulgent ease it is to sit with him night after night as he plays his games with his half-witted father. What a beckoning to patience it is to note how he treats the sister who, in a mood of insanity, killed their mother, and to see him leading her, when the insanity comes on, across the fields to the asylum, and to see the tears upon his cheeks. What a spurring on to saintliness it is to live for an hour or so with this man who pretended to no saintliness, yet gave himself a willing sacrifice to duty and to love. He wrote no pessimistic philosophy—he wrote only what could bring the sunlight into the dark days of others. Colonel Newcome and Charles Lamb are both equally real men, and live in literature for all discerning men to know. They create about themselves an atmosphere of their own. Once in that atmosphere you

must accommodate your breathing to its sparkle and clearness. Being friendly with such people means a new element in life.

And the world is full of such inspiring friends in books. Dr. Johnson, as it were, walks by your door with a stately gait, and you peer out of your window, and promise yourself a dash of Johnsonian dignity in your unconventional manner. Immanuel Kant totters by, thumping his stick on the pavement, followed by his servant Lampe, who carries the philosophic umbrella; and you set your watch with the assurance that it is now exactly four minutes past four, since at that minute day after day Dr. Kant is wont to pass your window on his daily walk; and you pledge yourself to a little more law and order in your confused living. And now under your window there passes a little girl from another realm—a dancing, frolicking child from an Italian silk weaver's overjoyed with her single holiday in the year. You catch the blithesome notes of her song—and you stamp your foot and declare that you will never complain again at your inconvenient lot. You too will be contented and gay; and, as the child disappears around

the corner, you pull back your curtains and let in the sunshine to flood your room.

It is of great advantage to the parish priest to get beyond the interests and demands of his parish. There is danger of a selfish parochialism always. This is most delightfully avoided by entering into an intimate friendship with conspicuous religious leaders through current biography. To the man living what seems an isolated life on our Western plains there may come the lively happiness of congenial intimacies with such busy men as Bishop Westcott, Bishop Creighton, and Archbishop Temple. The dingy village street may quite fade, for the time being, and one will presently be walking up and down beneath the trees of Cambridge, seeing deep into the kind eyes of Professor Westcott as he talks of St. John and his Gospel. Or the bare American walls may melt into the picture in the book where Westcott goes into the Cathedral at Durham alone, and communes with all the forgotten saints who have made those stones precious. Again the petty talk of the village may be hushed in the talk which one is having with Mandell Creighton over Queen Elizabeth and

the Churchmen of her day. Or, suddenly one may find oneself in "London's central roar" with the gruff old Archbishop, half frightened by his brutal frankness, cheered by his kind, twinkling eyes, then laughing outright at his caustic fling at some pompous sinner. In all these dreams a man is transferred to mighty scenes of thought and action: a man feels that he has share in them. Does some one come home to say that he has met the American Consul to Buenos Ayres or the Governor of Nebraska; that may be fine, but it is not awe-inspiring, seeing that you yourself have within the hour been with Dr. Stanley at a court wedding at St. Petersburg—and it was only yesterday that you were with the Archbishop of Canterbury at the Queen's Jubilee in front of St. Paul's. There is no excuse for any parson to be either lonely or provincial. He may be always in the thick of world-movements and in the company of leaders. Our stuffy little houses may at any moment be exchanged for the halls of palaces.

It is good to go often into a great library. There you come instantly into a bewildering company. All cannot be your friends. But

you have the right to choose from the thousands. As you gaze up and down the shelves, you take down a book here and there as its title or its author appeals to you. You read a sentence, a page, a chapter; then the pages turn faster and faster till your glistening eyes have wandered through the delights of the whole volume. It is as if you had seen an attractive face in the throngs of a city street, you had surmised the charm of the life behind the face, you had spoken, met a quick response, melted at once into an eternal friendship. Such an event is practically impossible with men outside of books; with men in books it happens every day.

The preacher will often get fresh material by what is called "browsing" in a library. Browsing is like setting out on a voyage of discovery. You find charming countries that other men have sailed by; you feel a sense of ownership that cannot come with reading what you were advised to read or even what you yourself set out to read. Do you remember how the little Samuel Johnson used to prowl about his father's bookshop in Lichfield; how one day he imagined that his

brother had hid some apples behind a folio on an upper shelf; how Samuel climbed up to search for them, and, not finding them, turned to read the title on the folio? It was Petrarch. Oh, yes: he had seen the name in a preface as one of the restorers of learning. His curiosity was aroused. So he sat down with eagerness to read most of the book. When he went to Oxford, he found that men were reading only what their tutors told them to read; but he was not content with such meagre fare. So he plunged into the books of many authors, "not voyages and travels, but all literature, Sir, all ancient writers, all manly." The man who browses in the corners of libraries and bookshops will find books to which a formal bow is sufficient recognition; with others he will stop for a chat; then there are the books which he clasps in an everlasting friendship. Horne was telling his experience with Bishop Andrews's Devotions: said he, "Pray with Bishop Andrews for one week, and he will be thy companion for the residue of thy years; he will be pleasant in thy life, and at the hour of death he will not desert thee." Such are the books which you will know how

to find in the dark, books that recall the radiant day when first you entered into their friendship. These are not dictionaries and encyclopædias and books of convenient information. They are the poet that thrills you; the old tale of chivalry that puts you into the company of knightly souls; the stirring biography that teaches you how true a human heart can be, laid bare for you; the history that tells you how a nation strove against grim odds and overcame at the last. There they are—imperishable friends.

Out of such exhaustless friendship a preacher can safely draw for eminent material, material with richness of substance and subtlety of form. He will not descend to paltry books of anecdotes and illustrations. His own mind will be stored with the quivering facts of human experience as he has known them in the books he has loved and will love forever. Books there are which a preacher must have as tools of trade, books of reference and technical books. But he must have those other books—the books which straightway become friends. They are the books which will give light and life and joy to the sermons which he preaches. For

they will make a man's sermons broadly and richly alive.

5. Experience

The best of all material is what a preacher learns from his daily life in the world. Many a man passing through some crisis of sickness, failure, or sorrow, is brought "face to face with inner desperation." When his faith comes in to give him an amazing victory, then the man, if he be a preacher, is all on fire to give the same faith to people who, he knows, must be toiling through similar blackness of more than night. That is the sort of experience that makes a man preach at least one master sermon in his life, a sermon that catches one up into the seventh heaven, giving courage and gladness unspeakable.

Nor is the experience simply what one receives in one's own life. Because the pastor really cares for his parishioners, because he truly weeps with those who weep, and laughs with those who are merry, and sings with those who shout for joy, therefore he is able to appropriate as his experience the troubles and successes of those who are his. People

stop asking whether he has gone through the precise experience that is clutching at their heart-strings. It makes small difference whether he has or not; he knows, in any case. By fleet sympathy and whole-hearted love he has entered the lives of the people he serves, and their life is his life.

Sunday by Sunday he goes up into the pulpit to preach sermons appropriate to Christmas or Lent or Easter, or whatever the day may expect of him. But through it all runs the golden thread of the life which he and they who are his share in common. One and another sees in paragraph or sentence the clear indication that the preacher is thinking of him as he speaks—the bitterness or the sweetness described is from his own experience, and the preacher is using it to help others who may not have revealed themselves to him directly. The willingness to see what people long to show of their heart's frenzy or peace, is one part. The other part, is to imagine how this emotion, displayed by only one, runs deep through all humanity; and, though for the most part too shy to declare itself, is still longing for sympathy, for advice, for high solution.

The physician sometimes thinks that he sees more of life than any other. Perhaps he sees more of the wickedness of men than the priest, though I am doubtful. I suspect, on the other hand, that though the physician sees fortitude in men and women who face pain and death, he does not see the long vistas of goodness in the world which are revealed to the clergyman as he goes his rounds among rich and poor, sick and well. For much of the heroism of this world is attained when men are robust, and no doctor is near. And such a great deal of it is done so modestly, so secretly, that one discovers it only by accident. To see men and women do their brave, hard deeds without flinching, to see the light from heaven shining in their eyes, to hear their calm, even tones as they give their last commands, is to send the preacher forward with a new glow on his face to preach the power of Jesus Christ—a power which he himself has witnessed. If the preacher knows the depths of men's need, because he comes face to face with men's perfidy and weakness, he also knows the heights to which Christ may bring the souls that put their trust in Him.

So, naturally, we come to the last and highest source of power whence a preacher may acquire his material. It is from his own conscious communion with God that all that helps must come in the last analysis. It is the experience that is essential. To be versatile in knowledge, in books, in life—all will be useless unless a man may have the assurance that he is speaking in some true way as God's messenger. To study books is necessary; to love men is necessary; but, above all else, to know God is indispensable.

Of this no one dares to talk much. It is too sacred. But it all seems to be summed up in prayer. When a man has searched the world through, read all the books, and known all mankind, he may yet be a vapid preacher. He must pray God to give him the message. Then only can he preach. God means him to use all aids that will make the message plain to human hearts, but the message itself is taught of God. Ultimately the material is from Him.

In his vision, Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon a throne. Isaiah, seeing, cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips." Then flew one of the

seraphim, having a live coal from the altar of God, and laid it on Isaiah's mouth. When the Lord said, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" instantly Isaiah replied, "Here am I; send me." God gave him the message. Then, and then only, he became a preacher.

III

SUBJECTS OF SERMONS

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THERE are still people who insist upon distinguishing the secular from the religious. "Here," they say, "are Sunday, Church services, surplices, cassocks, stoles—these are sacred. There,"—pointing off to the horizon,—"are Monday, politics, butcher's aprons, red cravats,—those are secular." Such people, were they asked, "What shall be the subjects of sermons?" would say instantly, with a deprecating frown, "By all means let the subjects of sermons be chosen only from that corner of life which *we* call 'religious.' Except for family prayers and private devotions the preacher must not speak of week days."

Against every form and degree of such an attitude I cheerfully hurl anathemas. In so far as a man is religious, he recognises nothing secular. He claims every moment of the year, every inch of the earth,

for religion. He boldly proclaims that the preacher may preach anything—if only he will claim it for God, and make people see that God is the Lord of it. We cannot ask, "What shall be the subjects of sermons?" without including within it, "How shall the preacher present those subjects?" It is possible to preach about the Bible a sermon so hard, bitter, and godless that men will go away wondering what has become of the love of Christ. It is possible so devoutly to preach about the idle tales which people read to their children, that men will go home with the face of Jesus printed on their hearts. With such possibilities in memory we may safely lay down the principle that as this world belongs altogether to God, so God's minister is bound to no limit of subjects. He may preach everything.

There are certain subjects out of this limitless right upon which there is need to lay emphasis. Having decided what a preacher may preach, we ask what he must preach. Much of the difficulty in the choice of fit subjects comes from a man's defective sense of proportion. Frequently you hear

that an unusually capable preacher does not seem to be helping people. Asking why, you are told something like this: "Oh, he preaches nothing but single tax—it comes up in some form in every sermon; and we need something more than that." A thoughtful layman said a few days ago, "No, I do not go to church: there is nothing wrong with my nerves,—and the rector now talks of nothing but the way to cure people of nervous diseases." There are other clergymen who preach practically every Sunday about the validity of the Church's organisation. And there was a time in the South when some rectors never preached a sermon without mentioning General Lee. All these subjects are perfectly legitimate, but it is not legitimate to exclude other subjects. It would seem as if the Christian Year would keep men true to a broad proportion in the choice of subjects, but it is easy for a man whose mind has begun to run in a rut to slip back to his hobby after the second paragraph. The preacher is a teacher,—and a teacher of most serious matters,—therefore he needs to lay out for himself month by month and

year by year a sort of curriculum. He must see that he is not forgetting the various needs of his congregation. There are the young who need to keep unspotted and to hold their ideals aloft,—he must not forget them. There are the old who need comfort and encouragement as they think their task is over,—he must not forget them. There are business men with temptations, school-teachers with drudgery, mothers with anxieties, fathers facing financial ruin,—all these people must be remembered. No one kind of sermon will help them all equally. There must be all kinds of subjects that the saints and the careless may all alike learn the principles of the Kingdom.

Before I sift out certain groups of subjects, I wish to say a word to the man who asks why it is not enough, Sunday by Sunday, to preach the simple Gospel. That question may proceed from a guileless and sincere heart, or it may come from some crabbed hypocrite. Of course all sermons must be preaching the Gospel, if they are sermons at all. When a subject is chosen it merely means that the Gospel of our Saviour is to be brought to bear upon that definite detail

in life. Wherever a sermon starts, it ought at last to make men think of Christ, whether His Name is mentioned or not. What men mean by a Gospel sermon is ordinarily a sermon which develops some incident in our Lord's life and draws the lesson from it, perhaps, of personal devotion and imitation. That is a valuable sort of sermon; but it is not more a Gospel sermon than a sermon that takes an incident in our present-day world and seeks to discover the way a man possessed of Christ's Spirit would meet it. The Gospel of Christ is all the world, either actually or potentially, brought into the mind and heart of Christ. A man must beware of cant and short-sightedness before he accuses a sermon of not being a Gospel sermon.

We may now, with a good conscience, proceed to examine the pre-eminent subjects of a preacher's year.

1. Current Events

A great teacher of history was wont to say to his class: "I expect you to get your facts out of books. In my class-room you will get only their interpretation." The

primary function of a really good preacher is similar. Only the people do not get their facts out of books; they get them out of experience, out of the current news of the week. A great event arouses serious questions. It sends people to the deep places of life. When the President lies dead, when Martinique is ruined by a volcano, when San Francisco and Messina are wrecked by earthquakes, men ponder the issues of life, death, and destiny. To come to the Church after such a startling calamity, and to hear from the Christian preacher no faintest attempt at interpretation, or even remembrance, is to feel that Christianity is either faithless or frozen. Either Christianity has no word to say about God's relationship to such disasters, or else, knowing, Christianity does not care what comes to bereaved nation or sorrowing city. Perhaps,—one groans in despair at the thought of it,—perhaps the darkness and the indifference are mingled.

I can imagine two arguments against such an effort to interpret the current facts of the time. The first is that it is not good taste. There is the dread lest people will think that we are striving for the sensational. A clergy-

man once told me that he always made a note about a conspicuous event; and months later, when the congregation by no remotest chance could identify it, he interpreted the general idea. That congregation was spared the vulgar habit of associating any word spoken in the pulpit with real life. Well! think now of a doctor who would say in December, "My dear patient, I noticed that you were in great pain last May,—I leave you a little medicine to cheer you up." I have already spoken of Emerson's gibe, "By good taste are ye saved." If he still takes an interest in our advance, I trust that he now finds in us qualities so much sterner that, though he still approves our taste, he forgets to mention it.

The other objection is more vital. The preacher says that he does not know what the recent crash means. He begs you to behold his modesty. But is he modest? Is he not simply declining to be God's messenger? Let him read his Bible and see what Old Testament prophets said in the face of passing events. Then let him get down on his knees and ask God to speak through him to the people; that when

Sunday morning is past, they may sing: "God is our hope and strength: a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved: and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea." Better a halting, stumbling sermon which, however shabby its argument, shows an implicit trust that God has the terrible events in His keeping, than the most eloquent and easy discourse which smoothly passes them by.

The preacher must dare to interpret events to men—not when men have forgotten them—but while the questions and the doubts bite and sting. "Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered,"—and let God's messenger proclaim the victory.

2. The Nation

In every Christian pulpit there ought to be at least three sermons each year on the Nation. A national holiday, an impending election, some national woe, may provide a starting point. There is no lack of motive.

Whether Church and State should be joined is debatable. But there can be no

debate whether Church and State should at every opportunity co-operate in the common work of serving humanity. The Church needs to remember that ideals must be translated into flesh and blood; the Nation needs to remember that no true prosperity can be founded on the expedient or the politic; there must be an exacting and high ideal far ahead. The Church ought to be the conscience and will of the Nation.

The officers of the Church do love their country. I am sure of that. The careless critic sometimes suspects them of coldness because they refuse to indulge in personalities, because they will not hold up for ignominy and scorn certain men whose names have grown black during the excitement of a campaign. The charge is sometimes made that the clergy are afraid to say plain words about men who are commonly blamed for certain national vices, such as trusts, bribery, under-paid labour, and impure food; lest, in so doing, they alienate influential members of their congregations. I do not believe that clergymen are afraid to say what they believe right and true. But I wish to tell you this: when a man stands up

in the pulpit, and begins his sermon with the declaration, either in his own heart or aloud to the people, that he is about to speak in the Name of God, he feels a grave responsibility. He strives then to say only words which he *knows* to be true. Vague surmises, brilliant guesses, are not for him. The rich man is just as important as the poor man: one must be justly treated quite as the other. Neither a man's prosperity nor a man's misfortune is excuse for rash speculation about the way he came by his rise or his fall. It may be easy in private gossip or in political wrangling to brand a man a thief on circumstantial evidence; in a court of law it is hard; in a Christian pulpit it ought to be impossible. Years ago, after the death of a notorious millionaire, I remember hearing one of the gentlest of preachers condemn the methods by which the millionaire gained his wealth. Though I heard the same preacher Sunday after Sunday, I cannot remember any similar word of condemnation—yet the papers and the popular orators had condemned men almost every week. It was impossible to think that preacher a coward. He was only

a man who felt his enormous responsibility as one who tried to speak in the Name of the God of Truth. His blow that spring Sunday fell with crushing weight because men knew how he measured his words, and they knew instantly that what he called bad was bad. He knew the truth; because he knew, he spoke out like the man and the Christian that he was—and is.

What then shall national sermons be about? They may not attempt to decide for the voters which is the better candidate when one man stands pitted against another for an office. Must the Church therefore meekly follow, with a bottle of rose water, after the vote has been taken? No! The Church, so far from following, must do more even than lead—*the Church must blaze the path.*

If every Church in this land could inspire its congregation with the conviction that nothing in statescraft is to be done for convenience, for expediency, for policy, but every single act is to be done only as it is right and because it is right; and, with this conviction, could inspire a will sufficiently strong to shake off all appeals and threats

and *do* that which is seen to be exactly right, then what a Government we should have in Washington and in every one of our State capitols! Can you contemplate that vision and say that the Church has no conscious contribution to make to the vigour and integrity of the Nation? The Church can do all that it did in the days of Hezekiah, the King, and Isaiah, the Preacher. It can save the Nation. It can cry, "Let there be no surrender to policy, let there be no compromise with expediency; shut the gates, endure the siege, feel the gnawings of hunger—and await God's deliverance and His victory!" Who or what can do more for a Nation than a body of preachers who will do that?

What does every preacher hear again and again? I am speaking no guess, but words which I myself have heard; and I know that you have heard them too. Men say, "I know that this man whose election I work for is not fit for the office, but he is fairly sure to be elected, and if he is elected and discovers that I stood out against him in any way, he will injure me." Perhaps the preacher may so strengthen that man's

will that he will dare to be in the minority where the righteous and the brave are standing. Men say, "I allowed my name to be used for an office, I employed only honourable means for my campaign; but I saw around me much that disgusted me, I therefore beg that you will not urge me to stand again for any public office." Perhaps a Sunday morning sermon may give that man a vision of the success that comes even with failure, when failure is bought with honour. It is fairly easy to succeed. It is woefully hard to fail, when putting one's hand into a very little pitch would change the day.

A brave individual, like Prince Hohenlohe, may call the legislators and statesmen of a Nation back from their time-serving, even from dark and sinuous ways; and all praise to such individuals for their insight and courage. But the Church exists by a divine commission, to beckon the Nation from standards less than perfect to the absolute standard of justice. The American Church ought persistently to hold before the men of this great Nation the ideal of every single man serving the Nation, not for his gain, not for the Nation's gain, not for his glory, not

for the Nation's glory—but only for the fidelity of this Nation to the laws of a Supreme and Perfect Judge. If the Church, through its preachers, will maintain that duty, this Nation shall have no decline, but must mount from strength to strength, till America becomes as the kingdom of God and of His Christ.

How can preachers who love their country be squeamish or indifferent! Will they not plead for a Nation's life.

3. Sin

The health of the Nation depends ultimately upon the individual citizen. Even higher than the demand to preach to patriots is the duty to preach to men.

I am sure that we need to preach to men as sinners. I am sure that we must bear down upon them so hard that we shall convict them of whatever sin is in them. Certain movements of our day, too well known to need naming, are flattering men's torpor by explaining cunningly that sin is the shadow in the picture, that it is nothing more real than a figment of our imagination, that,

consequently, if we shall say that there is no such thing as sin, then sin will cease to bother and taunt us, sin will be like virtue, all one even calm and forgetfulness. The tawdry philosophy that tries to explain this sophistry may not appeal to the thoughtful man, but the indifference to sin is more or less in the air. The young man who confesses that when he first fell into gross sin he had frightful twinges of conscience, now laughs at these ancient scruples, assuring you that he is only doing what all men do, and he has no sense of sin. Perhaps people are, on the whole, as good as they ever were; but I am inclined to believe that they do their crooked deeds more cheerfully, with less compunction, than ever before. It is in the air that right is not so very right, and wrong is not so very wrong.

Assuredly it is infinitely more wholesome to save a man from this hideous drift into sin by showing him heaven, than to check him by filling his mind with terror, and showing him the hell that yawns at his feet. But in such precarious business it is the part of a genuine love for the human soul to leave no appeal untried. There

is too much at stake to pick and choose one's tools with daintiness. Men wonder why the youthful Frederick Robertson has outlived in power all the other preachers of the nineteenth century. A friend said to me recently, "By temperament and Churchmanship I would naturally go to Liddon for sermons to help me; but I take down Robertson twenty times for one time that I put my hand to a volume of Liddon." Why has Frederick Robertson such abiding power? The secret is revealed when one discovers that this gentle prophet of God's love was a student of Jonathan Edwards. Thomas Arnold, too, had the double power: he inspired the boys of England by the brilliance of his ideals—he also made their teeth chatter in their heads before the hideous power of sin. He hated sin so transparently and hotly that when a boy of Rugby, grown a man, had his hand upon some secret crime, the victim snatched his hand from the sin as from a scorching flame, because it flashed upon him how Dr. Arnold would look if he could see him—the noble face black with contempt and scorn. The pupil then saw his sin—and was saved from its power.

I have no accusation to make. I do not know whether preachers are looking upon life in a soft, easy way, prating smartly of virtues, with little news of the dangers of sin. But I do know that they ought to talk about sin, about individual forms of sin. The way Jonathan Edwards made people shudder at sin is not the method for us. But we ought, in some way, to make people shudder at sin. People ought not to be scared into heaven. But they ought to be scared away from sin. They ought to be made to hate it.

When a preacher talks to a country congregation about the recent insurance scandals in New York, it is his duty to see that no country shop-keeper goes out of Church that morning with a self-satisfied smile on his face, like a veritable Pharisee, pleased that the rest of the world is so bad, while he is so good. The preacher's business is to send each of the congregation out with the penitent trembling thought, "Lord, is it I?"

Isaac Lee a good many years ago preached one Lent afternoon in a comfortable parish where all were strangers to him. Incidentally he drew an imaginary picture of a man who

was trustee for many estates, tempted in the night to open his safe, and to remove a valuable security from a box and to replace it with a worthless deed. He went over certain self-justifications that might beguile him, certain appeals of love and family and religion that might hold him back. Afterwards the rector said to Lee, "Why did you mention that nasty temptation? Gentlemen do not do that sort of thing,—and my men are all gentlemen." Probably they were all gentlemen; but a few years after, one of the kindest and gentlest of them was trapped in a series of crooked dealings which involved the criminal loss of more than a million of dollars. He was a man of truly noble instincts, a gentleman indeed: only he had a hazy notion of sin. He did not hate it. He was not even afraid of it. He played with it. It caught him in its insidious trap. I have often wondered whether, if his rector had more often preached plainly, even vehemently, about sins, the first timid venture into dishonour would have been averted, and so terrible a descent to the worst would have been impossible. If the day he made the first smiling slip from rectitude,

he could have heard some ringing word of the last Sunday's sermon, coming to his memory with a crash of accusation, revealing just what it was he was starting to do, then perhaps he had been saved. It is all a baffling speculation of what might have been. But, in any case, the theory that gentlemen and saints do not have very vulgar and common temptations is not true. Every man needs to be taught to abhor evil.

And the warning ought to be definite. Lying, slander, stealing, intemperance of every sort, irreverence, selfishness, unforgiveness, hate, ought to be so specifically condemned, that a man will instantly fumigate his heart to kill any lurking germs of such pestilences. Moreover, the preacher's scorn ought to be sufficiently vivid to impress the listener with a dread of becoming liar, thief, or sot—not because of results, but because the sin itself is disgusting.

On the other hand, the preacher has no right to take the sermon time to air his personal grievances. Though one must preach out of a knowledge of human nature, no preacher is entitled to attack the frailties of a sinner of his congregation, in such a

way that the sinner becomes isolated definitely in the minds of the congregation, and the victim, playing the rôle of illustration, is recognised. In the effort to avoid prophesying smooth things, we should not be gleeful in prophesying the rough things. A clever woman recently took charge of a restless small boy, who occasionally needed correction. "When I begin to punish him," she confessed, "I do it for his sake. But when he resists, I get a little angry, and then I do it because I enjoy it." A preacher should beware of enjoying himself as he punishes the imaginary sinners. He should have no racy spirit of vengeance. His only aim should be to make his congregation detest the evil way.

There is another warning that is not wholly superfluous. To make men and women see that sin is sin and to make them abhor it, it is not necessary to hold up a revolting photograph of sin. There is a very small clan of preachers who seem to think it meritorious if they overstep the bounds of decency in their frank portrayal of crime. Apart from the crudeness of it and the lack of sensibility, it is apt to be for some weak hearer

a temptation rather than a warning. It is not so much the description as the sense of horror which is communicated with the few piercing words which sufficiently declare exactly what is meant. In certain old editions of Fox's Book of Martyrs there were engravings showing the ingenious and terrible ways the martyrs met torture and death. Many a boy has spent hours nothing short of delightful over those ghastly pictures. A picture of wrongdoing may be so vivid and intense as to exercise a sort of spell, and attract rather than horrify. One does not easily forget the clergyman who graphically told his Sunday-school the enormity of the cruelty which would make a boy put a straw into a toad's mouth and then blow him up. It was all very vivid, and the little girls shuddered. But on the way home the moralist found his own boy by the roadside enjoying the sight of a cruelly inflated toad.

There are risks to be avoided, but, among other sermons, the preacher must preach sermons which shall convict the sinner of his sin, and make him hate it so sorely that he will repent.

4. Consolation

There is an obvious danger in the preaching about sin: the preacher may grow hard, unsympathetic, exacting. "Our rector," I heard a woman say, "lets us down into hell every Sunday morning—and then cuts the rope." Searching sermons, as they are called, need to be supplemented, transcended.

I fancy that many a preacher at the end of life wishes that he had preached more comforting sermons. Most of the people to whom we preach are trying hard to lead good lives. They have temptations; now and then they trip; but they need more than warnings—they need encouragement. They need to know the comfortable Gospel of Christ.

So I say frankly that the preacher must preach doctrinal sermons. He must preach the most definite news of God which he can grasp. For comfort, to be comfort, must be more than sweet words and flowing assurances: it must be based on the firmest, deepest facts of life. There must be reasons, reasons so good that the mind will be convinced. In a word, there must be preaching of sound doctrine.

The reason that some congregations have an aversion to doctrinal sermons is because the preacher is apt to deliver raw and rasping homilies made up of isolated dogmatic utterances. "These," he says, with a chill in his voice, "these you must believe—or I'll not be responsible for the consequences." The people thereby get the unhappy notion that doctrine is a bitter necessity which must be swallowed as children take medicine. He is a mean preacher who does not convince his congregation that doctrines are given to us by the Holy Spirit to help us to understand the world, ourselves, and God. They are not dark shibboleths, but bright revelations of the truth. They are not tests of our respectability, but the clearest messages which intelligent men have received of the goodness and the love of God. They must be given, not for the punishment, but for the comfort and the encouragement of men.

No preacher has right to his satisfaction when he has fiercely announced an unintelligible dogma, congratulating himself that he has done his duty. Unless, through the doctrine, he has made men *see* a little more

of the truth, he is an unprofitable bungler, and he had better turn to mending shoes or pounding stone. An even grosser fault is the blind and stupid prejudice which seeks orthodox approval by pausing in a sermon (on Moses, let us say) to have a flounce at higher criticism, calling it heinous names, but giving no reasons. If the preacher thinks it well to maintain a point of view against modern critical scholarship, and will do so with show of reasons and a sunny temper, that is altogether different; the light may come in to be a comfort to certain troubled and perplexed parishioners. Quite as cheap as these taunts against higher criticism are the sneers against what are sometimes called the moth-eaten dogmas of the past. If a man wishes to ease the people's hearts of certain Calvinistic burdens, there is an intelligent way to do it; so that the descendant of some John Knox will go home convinced that God is kinder than he had dared to hope, and he will have no loyal pain because his grandfather has been maligned.

Once more we must remember that what to preach is inextricably locked with how to preach. Doctrines gain in power and

comfort in proportion as a congregation has confidence in a preacher's honesty and knowledge. A Sunday sermon is not the proper occasion for a preacher to thresh out his doubts and difficulties, least of all to proclaim what he does not believe. But it is vital that people believe the preacher sincere and candid to the last degree, so that they are sure that he is not afraid to say exactly what he believes. A preacher must be absolutely straightforward. If a congregation, unable itself to study theology and modern criticism, feels sure that the preacher keeps abreast of the times, reads the technical books which make the denials and state the difficulties, and yet in spite of knowing the worst, keeps his faith not only sane, but joyfully secure, then for that congregation the highest comfort in the Easter sermon will be, not the word of argument, not the handing down of the Church's authority, but the clear-eyed, honest and frank avowal, "I come to you, this Easter day, to tell you that I am sure that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and that His promise is to be kept—there is eternal life for those you love and for you."

The doctrinal sermon stands for comfort, because it is constructive. It never tears down, it always builds up. It has no delight in being clever, in knocking out props, in startling people. If the preacher can give a better assurance than that which the dear deaf old lady in the front pew now has, let him give it. She will be glad enough and grateful enough to take it, and to relegate to her intellectual rubbish heap the old idea which formerly occupied that particular niche in her mind. But it is bourgeois to the last degree to win the applause of some sportive young man by dashing and inconsequent iconoclasm. Men need comfort; they therefore need faith—all they can get of it. So the preacher of doctrine must be not negative, but positive. He must not dwell on the mistakes of the past, but upon the glories of the certain future.

In a parish of any size hardly a week passes that the prayers are not read for both the sick and the afflicted. Besides these sorrows which come in the natural course of our humanity, there are other troubles, and word is constantly coming to the rector that he remember, in the prayers of the Church

and in his own private prayers, the singular afflictions that have come across the paths of certain of his parishioners. The world is very full of trouble. No one more than the rector can know just how tragically full of trouble it is. To the young it may seem strange that trouble is so often referred to in sermons. But most of the congregation know why. And they are grateful that the word of understanding and sympathy can come to them from the Christian pulpit, so that, without even declaring their bitterness, they can know that they have fellowship in the bearing of it.

But no mere assurance of sympathy is enough. The human touch is cherished, with all its kindness and affection; but it is not enough. There must be the conviction, borne in upon the soul by the preacher's prophesying, that God has the souls of His children in His perpetual care. There must be the bringing of the distracted mind out of darkness into the light of trust in God. There must be the feeling, conveyed by the preaching, that God is so full of love for us that even what now seems impenetrable sorrow shall be revealed as an

element in a completer joy than could have been, had not this strain of sorrow entered in and taken its dreary place. Some way the agony of the spirit must cast itself down because the spirit prays, "O God, give me grace to trust to Thy never-failing care and love those who are dear to me for this life and the life to come, for I know—*for I know*—that Thou wilt do for them and for me better things than I can desire or pray for." That is the fitting end which sermons on consolation may accomplish. It is the faith that comes with the conviction of who God must be—our Father, our most loving Father, transcending in His love all our wildest dreams.

That conviction of real consolation can come only through the doctrinal sermon—not the absurd thing which by a travesty sometimes passes for the doctrinal sermon, but the sermon which catches the light from heaven, making clear the perplexing places in life, unveiling the very face of God. The poor sufferer may say with clasped hands, "I *know* Whom I have believed;" and smile through his tears. To the man in trouble there is no help but to know God.

Through the divine science of theology, made intelligible by preaching, the priest of God may declare Him as He is. That is the consolation which passes all human comfort. God gives it, over and over, through preaching.

5. The Church

There is need of sound preaching on the Church. There are some preachers who preach practically nothing else; but they are apt to do it in a hard, mechanical fashion. They do not make the Church seem attractive or lovable. There are other preachers who never speak about the Church, except now and then in an evening lecture. The Church exists as the greatest institution in the world, divinely planted and divinely guided. Among sermons upon other subjects there should be clear and happy sermons on the Church, so preached as to make men enthusiastic for the institution, eager to strengthen and enlarge it.

This is done best not by giving harsh theories, but by giving concrete history. Occasionally, of a Sunday morning, there should be sermons on such subjects as these: "Henry

the Eighth and the English Reformation;" "Tyndale and the English Bible;" "The History of the Book of Common Prayer;" "The First Bishop in America." Or, going farther into the past, there may be an occasional sermon on some one of these subjects: "Athanasius and the Council of Nicaea;" "The Conversion of St. Augustine;" "Francis of Assisi;" "Savonarola." The way these historical or biographical subjects are treated may provide ample reason for their place in a Sunday morning service. With God's help, they may be the means of convincing a congregation that God is in history guiding His Church from age to age, not by majorities, but by the power of His hidden might, as when the frail deacon Athanasius stood against the world and conquered.

Another way to awaken enthusiasm for the Church is to spend the sermon time of a Sunday morning with the life of some modern missionary hero. The life of Chinese Gordon, of Hannington, of Patteson, may be the most vital sort of sermon on the power of Christ in our day and generation. The technical missionary sermon, preached to stimulate gifts for Church ex-

tension among people whom the congregation has not seen and presumably will never see, will include descriptions of living men, who are giving their lives to difficult regions, for the love of Christ. The concrete always makes a cogent appeal. Nothing is so deadening as to attempt to give people a philosophy of missions. When people hear of the heroes who leave home and friends to do the work which belongs equally to all, love and prayers and money will go out abundantly to those brave missionaries. You can generally discover in what parishes the Church is being rightly preached by the proportion of income which they send to missions. Some parishes which hear constantly of the theory of the Church give nothing. That shows that they never really understand what the Church is; they do not long to spread its power; they do not insist upon making Christ known throughout the world. There is something fatally wrong with the preaching in that parish. It gives no enthusiasm for the Church.

There ought, again, to be sermons on the parish. In dread of parochialism some preachers feel it a sin to preach sermons

about the individual parish at home. Ordinarily a parish can best seize the idea of the Church as a world-wide organisation if it has a love for the home parish. One zeal helps the other. The anniversary of the founding of a parish may be the fitting time to review the parish history, and to "mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord." The fifth or the tenth anniversary of a rectorship may be a fitting time to sum up the progress for a shorter period. These sermons which give the people consciousness of the value of their history play a good part toward giving a love for the parish. It is affecting to see with what loyalty people cling to a parish Church through two, or even three, generations, though their later home may make it extremely inconvenient to reach it.

When one speaks of the Church as an institution, one must also speak of the Sacraments which give to the Church its definiteness. There ought to be sermons of instruction about the Sacraments in every parish. It is most difficult to preach rightly about Sacraments, because the man who becomes definite is prone to become false in his teach-

ing. He limits God's grace, and attempts to define what the Church, under God, has not defined. There is need to be modest and cautious when one speaks of mysteries, which have sent great and pious men into opposite camps when they have tried to say in stern words of prose what they have meant by the Body and Blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper. The story is told of Westcott that once when he was walking with a student in Cambridge, trying to clarify the student's ideas on a certain fretful problem of theology, Westcott turned to him with the eager question, "Do you understand?" The youth gazed into the burning eyes of Westcott and said with a shiver of joy, "Yes, now I understand perfectly." "Oh," cried Westcott, wringing his hands, "then I must begin all over again—nobody ought to understand this perfectly." There is an important truth in that reply of Westcott. The people who lightly announce that they have been all around a subject and have it all within their comprehension, have most often been only around what might be called a spur—when they suppose that they have circled the mountain.

Now, remembering all this, I am afraid that the Sacraments are sometimes preached slightingly even by men who honestly reverence them. They are made to seem to many people only miraculous charms. There is a magical tone about the sermons which is foreign to the Gospel directness and simplicity. The Sacraments thus come to appear the thin places in a massive wall which seems to be separating God from His human children. God, as it were, speaks to men from time to time through these most sacred rites, as men, facing a wall, speak through the crevices in that wall: at all other times God appears to be separated from men. He is apparently not always "nearer than hands and feet." I put the case thus baldly, because I am sure that some sermons reverently intending to exalt the Sacraments, apply to them a too limiting and too definite description, bringing the congregation to a conclusion which tends to impoverish the idea of God, as our Saviour has revealed Him once for all, our ever-present and most loving Father.

The true way to preach about the Sacraments is to remember that they rise above

the region of prose and are in the lucid air of poetry. They are not less than prose, as stupid people would be apt to interpret this sentence, but infinitely more—they are all that prose would make them, and more, vastly more. The Church Catechism gives the most satisfactory definition, if one must try to define; but it will be seen that this definition stops short of defining beyond a certain point. The true solution is then in sight. It is a living benefit which we preach in the Sacraments. Even if we could understand the process, the benefit would be no more than it is without that understanding. To pretend to accept any theory as a fixed solution is apt to detract from the benefit, because the theory is sure to be insufficient. "This hath Christ done for me;"—that is the test.

Let us see, then, what a preacher may say if he does cling to this practical view. He will proclaim that the Sacraments are divinely given means of simply and implicitly obeying Christ; and so, by an outward act, opening wide our lives to His presence, thus admitting to our inmost selves not His body and His blood only, but His

heart, His mind, His soul, His whole life. There can be no strife over such a declaration. Yet it goes to the topmost notch of aspiration and hope. There is nothing that can be beyond it. To begin to define the means by which the gift is given is to limit the gift in some disastrous way. Let the preacher declare what he *knows*, not what he thinks, or what his wing of the Church thinks. The truth is able to absorb all theories and to blot them out in the process. The obedience and the assurance coming from the obedience, then make the Sacraments not only immediate blessings, but pledges of perpetual blessings. As the appeal is practical, so men approach the divinely given means of grace with hearts lifted above all controversy, and a wonderful and practical end is attained. How inspiring is that scene where many men and women, urged by the preacher, kneel humbly together in the absorbing effort to obey the Lord Jesus, and the air vibrates with the glory of Christ's presence, consciously, really, spiritually received.

In these days especially there is one other phase of Church life that must receive atten-

tion in the pulpit. That is Church unity. Church unity is a great ideal toward which not only Church leaders, but the rank and file of Christian people, must strive to press forward. The candid observer can as yet see no plan that seems likely to be adopted.

The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral—conservative, guarded—has received most respect. The people outside the Anglican Communion most likely to seek a basis for union, stumble at the condition of the fourth article —"the Historic Episcopate locally adapted." Sermons on Church unity may wisely then take two lines. First, they may kindle a desire for Church unity. For, it must be confessed, people devoted to their own way of doing things dread any letting down of the bars lest the otherwise-minded pour in and change the customs. Congregations need to be given the vision whereby they shall recognise that the Church of the future must be great enough to admit the very best that we all have to-day. This will not mean a dead uniformity, but will mean the generous toleration which will sacrifice preferences and tastes to the demands of the temperaments of others. It is what is exemplified

in a large degree in any considerable parish to-day. With changing points of view, with varieties of training, with that sensitive element known in all people as temperament, there must be sacrifices. A service may be too elaborate for some, too bare for others; but because people are Christian brethren they delight in what does not help them, either in ornateness or in simplicity, because they know that it does help the neighbour in the next pew. It is better to be generous and loving than to have your own way. People need to have the ardent desire to run what may seem a risk and to bring into one inspiring and inclusive organisation all the people who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

So much then for sermons which cultivate the desire. There must be sermons that point out the contribution which our own Communion is, in loyalty to the truth, bound to make. The loose unity of federation is only unity in pretence. What we wish is to find a basis for unity which shall save and enhance all that is precious. By the discussion of the Quadrilateral, it is plain that our contribution is to be the Historic Ministry

—right ideas about it, and the definite institution itself. The avenue of most probable persuasion is a demonstration of the value of the continuous ministry as a witness-bearing organisation. People may be made to see that such an event as the Resurrection has independent testimony, apart from all documents, in the chain of ministers, each receiving his commission from an older officer and that older officer in turn receiving his commission from a still earlier official, and so on to the beginning. It is the unbroken voice of the ages, most scrupulously guarded, telling men to-day what happened in the remote past. Men must some day acknowledge the utility and comfort of such an authoritative witness.

How the Church shall be united is a dark question as yet. When God is ready, He will whisper the secret to His prophet. Meantime, the way must be prepared: the congregations of the earth must be pleaded with by the preachers, so that with a real longing they shall pray for unity.

The last and perhaps the most valuable preaching about the Church is the kind that incites young men of character and training

to devote themselves to the Christian ministry. The first sermon preached by an American in the English Church seemed to the preacher to be a wretched failure. Years passed; and an English clergyman of distinction confessed to the preacher that from that sermon at Leeds came the inspiration to enter the ministry and to do his work in the world. It would be hard to find an estimate superior to that. Very likely sermons not intended to persuade men to be clergymen may have had most power to do so. But in spite of that possibility, there ought to be at least one whole sermon each year which presents to the families of a parish the honour and the responsibility of sending one member from each of their families to the ministry. The appeal need not be made to promising youth alone, but to fathers and mothers, whose enthusiasm, whose counsels, whose prayers may all be fixed on the high desire that their son be a minister of Christ. I believe more and more in the devout parents who were wont to pledge themselves to God to yield one of their sons to this service. Cases doubtless may be found where parents were unwise,

urging too insistently a son who felt no inner call, and so forcing upon the Church wayward and heartless officers. But for one such case, it seems to me that there were hundreds of children who grew up naturally to anticipate the honourable task expected of them. It surely seems as if we who know the joys of the ministry could tell a story sufficiently thrilling and enticing to make some father kneel down before his baby's cradle and offer up his child, with God's help and approval, to what we have pictured as the most desirable life on earth. For the ministry offers to-day the sacrifice, the poetry, and the dash which used to go into crusades and patriotic wars. Most of us may be tamely comfortable enough, but there are, off on the frontier and in foreign lands, the men who are giving themselves to the hardest places without count of cost. One by one they go to the corners of the earth, where the climate may be dangerous, the loneliness unspeakable, the distance from home almost unbearable, the obstacles to success almost insuperable. It is heroism to the last degree, but the battle cry is sufficient for it—"The World for Christ!" Such men

are of finer stuff than the anxious people who trudge through bitter cold to get the gold of Alaska. They must be of finer stuff than even the best soldiers. No crusade ever had half the splendour of this modern appeal. It is all rational, practical, sensible, real. Best of all, the men who are going, one by one, to India and China and Japan have better minds, stronger bodies, whiter souls than most of the best of us at home—and they are not fanatics. Their faces shine with a heavenly purpose. They are building so carefully, so strongly, that empires yet unborn shall bless their work, though never knowing their names. It makes the heart leap to read of their schools, their orphanages, their hospitals, their Churches. The eye flashes with pride as you read of their patience, as they wait for prejudice to turn to trust, and trust, at last, to love. Who could hear the tale of such heroes and not desire to have one most near and dear give himself to a like service? Spartan mothers surely are not all dead. Let the appeal ring out for the heroes—and the heroes will come.

Yes, the Church is one of the great sub-

jects for sermons. It has history and authority—and these should be described—but above all it has service. It offers men the greatest, divinest way to serve God and man. Therefore let there be courageous sermons about the Church.

6. Christ

To the essential subjects for preaching there is a climax. There is one theme which must be constantly in mind in every sermon. Indeed, whether the Sacred Name be mentioned or not, that sermon is a failure which does not make a man think of One both human and divine. And sermon after sermon ought to dwell on nothing else but His words, His deeds, His life. The summit of the climax is Christ.

As always, the way of preaching is bound up with the subject. Some men preach Christ of contention; so, because they preach Him in the wrong way they only seem to preach Him: really they do not preach Him at all. With reverence His name should be spoken; with affection His words repeated; with enthusiasm His power declared.

The preacher must stir the people by making them see Christ as He went up and down the lanes of Palestine. He must show them Christ as He has touched with His might the Christian centuries. He must demonstrate what Christ does for the individual soul, the moment the individual soul opens itself to Him. He himself must know Christ and he must be willing to tell what he knows. With this sturdy hold upon facts, the preacher must so appeal to the emotions of men that men will open their hearts to Christ. He must plead with them so to believe in Christ's power that they will dare to give their whole lives to Him; and thereby, and thereby alone, feel His life throbbing through their lives—so that old sins will drop away, and virtues, hitherto impossible, will become inevitable. I am more and more convinced that if a man wishes Christ to help him in any particular battle against sin, in any particular effort toward positive accomplishment, that man can get help enough to win his particular object only through a complete surrender to Christ. It may not be, "Come in, O Christ, so far as may be necessary to set me straight on the one commandment I am

prone to break." It must be, "Come in, O Christ, and be supreme in every corner of my life." There may be no division of allegiance, no reservations.

The world seems to go slowly towards righteousness. Men's wills are feeble. They start, and turn back, or sit down by the wayside. The preacher must hold up the all-including ideal—Christ for the individual soul, Christ for the Nation, Christ for the world. We are individuals, but we are parts also one of another. If the last man in China is unhappy, our happiness cannot be perfect. Our conscience shall tingle for the lack of love which failed to send us to his help. The preacher needs therefore to plead that men, not only as individuals, but in their corporate strength, let Christ in, so that weak wills be fused with the indomitable will of Christ, so that the whole Church, leavened by His will, be the power on earth Christ meant it to be, and men do greater deeds than Christ did in Palestine, because they have been made mighty in Him.

The world longs to believe in the Power of Jesus Christ. It is the preacher's glory

that he is set among men to preach that Power. He must convince men that the Power is available; He must inspire men with the longing to possess it; he must, as God's messenger, as God's ambassador, through his preaching, convey the Power, so that, men's wills being kindled, they will go forth to the victory.

Who is sufficient for these things? Not one. Therefore must the preacher pray to God for help.

IV

THE PREACHER'S ATTITUDE TOWARD HIS CONGREGATION

IV

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THE ministry is the most jealous of vocations. It demands supreme care in many directions. Men of ability and devotion, so far as sympathetic witnesses can discover, sometimes fail to build up the Kingdom of Christ in their neighbourhoods. This imposes upon us the conviction that certain defects, often slight, have power in the ministry as in no other calling, to mar the whole usefulness of a really sincere and capable man. It is not necessary to discuss in exactly what success in the ministry consists; but it is certain that to be successful a man must be efficient. Efficiency is won, I am more and more sure, not so much by remarkable ability as by a man's attitude toward his congregation. I do not mean to imply that the right attitude is trifling or easy. It tests a man's soul. A man

taking the wrong attitude may have many excellent qualities, but nothing can excuse him. His mistake is crucial.

A man's attitude to his congregation appears in no part of his ministry more clearly than in his preaching. A preacher's usefulness depends in large measure on the relationship which he conceives to be his to the congregation.

1. A Fellow-Sinner

A rather famous preacher was called a good many years ago to a Church in Chicago. It seemed inevitable that everyone would be glad to have him for rector. But he did not get on. One of the parishioners, being asked why the rector was not acceptable, answered with some heat: "He always addresses us, in his sermons, as '*You sinners.*' He ought to say, '*We* sinners.' "

The criticism is fundamental. It points to a defect in character: "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" It is by no means uncommon to have sermons give the impression that

the preacher is perfect, or that he thinks he is. Sensitiveness to sin in oneself is one of the marks of a saint. The saint does not separate himself from even the worst of humanity. He has a humility which to the ordinary mortal is at times even a little irritating. Consequently the man who gives out, consciously or unconsciously, the impression that he is above the weaknesses of his brethren, is apt to be discovered by his listeners to be lazy, or self-indulgent, or inconsiderate to his family, or to have one of several other foibles which, singularly enough, are not often described at any length in the preacher's sermons. Thereafter the violent and unsympathetic denunciation of sinners seems professional. The preacher and the man who walks abroad from Monday to Saturday are apparently different creatures, and the divorce is not edifying.

I remember that when I was a lad I was greatly troubled because I found that my mind wandered in my prayers, in Church and out of it. I had a feeling that I must be especially wicked, else every word would hold my attention. I shall never forget what a comfort it was to me when I heard

one night one of the saintliest clergymen I ever knew describing his own serious difficulty in keeping his mind on the service he was saying. Try as he would, thoughts of other things would blot out the meaning of the words, and sometimes he would be thinking of nothing at all. He said it was one of the peculiar difficulties clergymen had to face, since they were expected to use sacred words constantly; and professionalism was apt to settle down upon them. I can see to-day all the surroundings in which those frank and simple words were said. I do not think they made me stop aiming toward the ideal, but they took away the worry. I did the best I could, and I felt assured that God would accept my prayers. It was a step toward naturalness and freedom and joy in the religious life.

I have since found that the sense of wickedness because of wandering thoughts in prayer is as common as it is oppressive. I now never fail to make a full confession to confirmation classes about it. And men and women often come to me to tell how the sense of comradeship in the great desire to

think what they pray, against many failures, lifts a burden from their hearts. I suspect that it is the reason why a good many people are not confirmed more seasonably.

It must be said at once that it is possible to carry confession of one's weaknesses too far in the pulpit. The congregation neither is interested in all the preacher's failures, nor has a right to know them. You can easily imagine how a preacher might be so showily meek about his attainments as to be not only a bore, but a repulsive bore. In general a man can give the people the consciousness that he is one with them in the trials and sorrows of life. It all lies more in his attitude toward the congregation than in any particular words. If he has the right attitude, the words will care for themselves.

A man of unusual character was told a little while ago that a notorious wrongdoer was getting his punishment at last. The friend who was telling the story was exultant. There was silence for a space; the good man made no response. "Aren't you glad?" his friend asked at length. "No," he answered; "when I hear that some one

has done wrong, I always feel as if I had done it myself."

It is this corporate view of life which the preacher must communicate by his own human sympathy. He must teach, for example, that when we all kneel down together to say the General Confession, we are sharing responsibility for sin—we are asking God to forgive sins which many individuals in the congregation have never committed, but which are theirs because they have been committed by the humanity of which these same innocent individuals are inseparable parts. A little reflection makes a man see that though he may directly be free of a certain sin, he yet may indirectly have contributed to it. That is, if we may take an example, a man may have committed murder, and this deed may be the result of unjust wages, loneliness, ignorance of Christ and His hope —all of which defects in the man's outlook may justly, perhaps, be laid at the door of one or other of us. If some man had shown himself friendly, if some other had spoken the word of kind warning, if some one had invited the downward soul to Church—if—if—if—! You see how the responsibility

for sin reaches out among the surrounding people. People reading of great crimes ought to do more than shudder, they ought to beat their breasts and say, "Woe is me, that I did nothing to make that crime impossible!"

If people in general share this sense of sin, in so far as they are clear-sighted and care about it, the preacher, being also a priest and having the people's souls upon his conscience, must feel more sharply the community of sin. He never can talk of sinners in a foreign way as if he had no part with them. The whiter his soul the more gladly he will give it to make some soiled soul a little less black. Being peculiarly part of humanity, he will shirk no responsibility for what humanity has done. The people will never get the impression that he is wishing to draw away from their imperfections. In some high and wonderful way he will be sharing them, even bearing them. In some distant way he will be following after Christ, he will be taking away men's sins. From beginning to end, the people will never suspect that he could say, "You sinners."

2. A Fellow-Saint

Certain deacons, priests, and bishops cultivate a smug isolation from the common herd. As their vocation is sacred, so they conceive that the vocations of all others are secular. Sometimes at the Consecration of Bishops one reads that the preacher said, "My brother, I welcome you to this lonely life of the Episcopate." Since all the bishops I have known well have been the most cheerful and companionable of men, having, so far as I could tell, no lonely moments whatever, I have always wondered what sort of bishops they were who could give such a dismal picture of their office, and I am now convinced that either it is a poetical way of speaking, copied from the widowed Queen of England, or else these bishops have drawn an artificial line between themselves and the other good men who are serving God, each according to his station, within the bounds of their dioceses. Of course when things go wrong, all kinds of people are lonely—chimney-sweeps, bakers, kings. Bishops may expect a little loneliness with the rest. I mention bishops only

because they have a picturesque eminence, which makes the illustration more defined. I think that there is quite as large proportion of presbyters who cultivate the isolation of their sacredness. I even suspect that, as the newly ordered deacon buttons up his clerical waistcoat for the first time, he may feel as if he had suddenly turned the telescope around and were looking through the reverse end at his brothers who, as doctors and merchants and the like, were, a moment ago, near enough to touch, but who now have become specks on the remote horizon. It is a wrong point of view, a wrong attitude. It is bad for dioceses, bad for parishes, bad for mission Sunday-schools. Incidentally, it takes the power out of preaching.

Now let us see the right attitude, which is the opposite of this stiff loneliness. It is the point of view which is eagerly looking out into the world to see the men who are serving God. It is the attitude in the minister of Christ who says, "My vocation is sacred, and by this assurance I believe that the vocations of all men are sacred, whether they teach children, or plead before juries, or build houses, or heal men's bodies."

This, you see, is to call the ministry sacred, not because it is the only sacred calling, but because it *recognises* its sacredness, and thereby is set in the midst of all vocations to assure the men who are called to them that they too have an holy office, a royal priesthood.

I am not for a moment wishing to detract from the uniquely sacred character of the ministry of the Church, and its right to the exclusive exercise of certain functions in the sum of the work of the world. I believe that it is pre-eminently sacred; but one of the reasons why it is pre-eminently sacred is because it is freighted with the commission to discover to all men the sacredness in the duties which they are trying to do. As priests of God with authority, we may go to the agnostic settlement worker, who says that he does his work only for humanity; we may go to the physician, who, though he never comes to Church, spends himself for poor people in dark streets who cannot pay; we may go to the scholar who gives of his brilliance to plodding youth, for the love of helping some one; and we may say to them all: "What! you protest that you care nothing for Christ? We, as

priests of God, tell you that inasmuch as you do these things for these, His frail little brothers, you do your work for Him. We, His messengers, proclaim His gratitude."

The ministers of Christ go forth to be as leaven—not to affect a select corner of their communities, but the whole world. If their point of view is right, their busy neighbours will say, "These men hold their vocation sacred,—through them we begin to see a strange sacredness in our vocations."

I am afraid that the ministry is not aware how often it creates the impression of aloofness. A certain order of pious men called themselves the Society of Jesus; and straightway men hated these Jesuits, saying, "What right have these few men to call themselves particularly the Society of Jesus? Are we not all followers of the same Lord?" The declaration is not often so pointedly made, but many sermons give the impression again and again that ministers of Christ are more the servants of Christ than other men. Sometimes men are not indignant at the thought, but acquiesce in it: "Aha!" they cry in a superior tone, "*you* cannot say spiteful words about John and Martha

and Demas; *you* cannot stay at home from Church of a summer Sunday; *you* cannot play cards for money; *you* cannot use profane language; no, no, *you* cannot do these things, for *you* are a clergyman." The implication in such a silly speech—which is abominably common—is that there is a code of righteousness for clergymen which lay Christians need not obey. It is the most stupid of heresies. A Christian man, whatever the outward form of his vocation, has an absolute obligation to think and say and do his very best. I cannot help feeling that if we who are clergymen impressed vigorously upon the people about us, in our congregations and beyond them, that we hold them responsible with ourselves to find and obey a sacred calling there would not be this hollow note. They would know that the reason why we did this and left that undone, is solely because we are men, and we conceive that there are certain ways that every man should bear himself under given conditions. We do not tone down our duty to the easy level, but we demand a uniform, highest level for all. Every man has his clear duty; he is ex-

pected to see it; he is expected to do it to the last letter. The clergy are not examples in the sense that they are to be apart from the rest of humanity. They are to be so embedded in humanity that the highest aspirations of the clergy become the common aims of all about them. Let me give one instance. If a well-known clergyman in the full tide of his usefulness resigned his office, saying, "I can make much more money some other way; for my old age I must accumulate what will maintain me and mine in luxury," what a storm of surprised contempt would go up from those who looked on and heard. I can see possible excuse, but I sympathise with the world in its derision. The only thing I ask—and this ought to be preached—is that when a public officer of the State, superbly qualified to serve his country in high station, lays down his responsibility with the smiling confession that there is no money in statesmanship and he must serve his private business the rest of his days—the only thing I ask at such a time, is that the world send out so fiery a protest that never again will a man, great in his country's service, dare

to do else than serve her to the end—though he die poor, and his children have no legacy but his record of rich public sacrifice.

Think what an opportunity a preacher has to incite his parishioners to do their ordinary professions and businesses in a divine way, as to God. No task is so humble that it is not necessary to God's complete plan. Most men who work feel that their work is drudgery; or, if they do it gladly, they think it quite their own matter. All men need to be told that God puts them in definite posts to serve Him; one He sends to the carpenter's bench; one to the hospital; one to the teacher's chair; one to the home. They do not choose these places for themselves. A divine impulsion puts them there, and they must grow to feel, if they do not already feel, that they are doing the highest thing they can do—that no one indeed does a more heavenly work than theirs—because their work joined to all the other work of the world makes up the harmony of service which God expects. If their work is meagrely performed, the whole is made to suffer. There is no task that

is trifling. All devout toil, patiently done, is holy in God's sight. Let the preacher proclaim it over and over again. Let him say it with frank conviction. The day may then come when he shall see the faces of doctors and lawyers and merchants beaming with a new gladness, because fused with a new seriousness. It is not in singing and praying, in almsgiving and in kindness to the poor, that religion is exhausted. In all these it finds expression. But in what men have sometimes dared to call the secular, religion also moves. The so-called secular task, done with faithfulness and devotion, is a heavenly commission. Each man is sent to his work by the Lord God.

For all reasons therefore the preacher ought to insist in his sermons that he sees in the sacredness of his vocation the sacredness of all other callings by which men everywhere make up God's infinite variety of service. The preacher claims all service for God: he would only lead the way.

3. Sharing Responsibility for the World's Betterment

When the preacher finds that other people are doing definite portions of God's work in God's way, he may turn his attention to other aspects of the world's need. The strenuous archbishop used to say that he did not care who received the credit for any good work: all he cared about was that the work was done.

When parish-houses took upon themselves institutional work, there was a need for what we to-day call "manual training." Now manual training is provided for in most places, upon a large scale by the public schools. Where the need is thus adequately supplied it is wasteful for a parish to try to keep on doing what is better done at the expense of the whole community.

In these last months the question is thrusting itself upon us how far we ought to allow the ministry to invade the province of the physician. It is sometimes pointed out that our Saviour healed men's bodies, and therefore the clergy of His Church should give themselves to a like task. But our Saviour

was not the prototype merely of the ministry of the Christian Church. He was so complete and varied in His mission to mankind that we must see in Him the prototype of the teacher and the physician, as well as of the priest. We all alike, laity as well as clergy, look up to Him as Master, and try to follow His example. The wonderful advance in modern medicine and surgery, the relief of pain, the curing of diseases formerly called incurable, are the modern forms of our Saviour's miracles. He is behind them all, whether men confess it or not, as truly as He stood over the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda, and bade him take up his bed and walk.

There are times, everyone can see, when the clergyman must undertake part of the physician's function. When the parson goes as a missionary to a remote settlement, where no physician can be induced to come, the missionary justly tries to learn what he can of healing arts to relieve the pain of his parishioners. Nor is this the only case where there may be a temporary intrusion of one vocation into the realm of another. It may be that a great many

physicians have ignored the fact that souls and bodies go together; and that, in consequence, they must treat their patients as beings who have souls as well as bodies. Christian Science would not have gained way had not something been neglected. The Emmanuel Movement has come with sanity and deep religious motive. I feel sure that both these movements will pass; but they will not go till they have taught physicians that they must lay hold of the unseen but most vital power of God, if they would help and cure as they can help and cure. God's power is theirs if they will appropriate it. But He will not thrust it upon them: they must seek it that they may find it. The power of the physician is not waning. It does not need supplanting. But the physician must dare to allow the religion in him to show. He must *obviously* fear and trust God, so that the patient will instinctively feel that the physician comes as a messenger from God—a man of prayer. There is a great surgeon who demonstrates his skill often before a thousand doctors and students. He never puts his hand to his knife without saying to the students

before him, "Let us pray." And he confesses that he never does a single operation without praying for its success. I do not mean that a doctor shall be a sort of clergyman, giving counsel upon religious matters and conducting services. I mean merely that he shall learn that being a physician is one of God's callings, that God is interested in his work, and that God stands ready to co-operate with him, so far as the doctor will allow himself to become the medium of God's power.

It has probably been a useful demonstration of the power of religion in the domain of healing that it has taken nervous wrecks or people imprisoned by bad habits and made them well and altogether wholesome. This temporary invasion of the physician's realm by the clergyman seems to me to have been salutary. Having opened the physician's eyes and having shown him what he may accomplish, the clergyman should retire to his own peculiar field, which is big enough to take every minute of his time. Instead of setting up clinics for people who ought to go to religious physicians, the clergyman had better preach distinctly that physicians

must say their prayers as well as read learned technical treatises, that they must seek, in Church and otherwise, the direct contact with the Lord God—who is a personal God, not a mere Force, and is sought and known and realised in personal ways.

Rather than turn to become nerve specialists, the clergy should do what they can to make those who are already great nerve specialists become still greater. When all is told we must know that the religious physician is better able to cope with all forms of disease than the clergyman who has some knowledge of psychology and medicine. The physician needs to be told to overcome his shyness, or—alas!—his ignorance, and to dare to exalt his patients into new life by the word God. He needs to add to his profound technical knowledge, which he has as a modern doctor, the inspiring faith of a great-hearted Christian man. It is not talking that he needs, it is not preaching that he is to do—it is a brightness from his eye, it is a confidence ringing in his voice, it is a reverence in his whole bearing, all of which proclaim the physician a man called of God to his holy vocation.

The danger of what we call institutional work and the danger of invading the physician's domain is that the clergyman can easily give the impression that men are justified in giving almost exclusive care to their bodies. You frequently hear a father say, "Well, I give my attention to making my children strong and well: if they have robust bodies that is the best I can do for them." That surely is a great deal. But no clergyman can allow a man to say that what leaves out character is a complete story. Bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, and woe to the men who despise or neglect them. But it is possible so far to lay stress upon physical well-being as to make the body little better than a machine without real life. By giving up his more definite work and turning to the healing of sick and nervous bodies, the clergyman may seem to preach: "The physician's work is the great work in the world. Bodies are the chief thing after all."

Instantly there must be the recoil. It is the minister's function to preach that men have souls, immortal, invisible, the expression of depths of sorrow and of heights

of joy which no physical well-being can measure. The sane clergyman has all possible sympathy with the teacher who instructs the mind and fortifies it in prudence; he has equal sympathy with the physician who guards the health of the body; he has sympathy also for the philanthropist who provides gymnasiums and playgrounds and pleasant and sanitary homes for the poor. But his task is beyond these, a task fitting into them, and crowning them. His task is to make men aware of the highest life, that loves ideals, that seeks to serve mankind in heroism and sacrifice, that dreams of following Christ, that dares to know God. If a man has a supremely great task he had better cling to it, make men feel it if he can, get men to co-operate with him, not by doing exactly what he is doing, but by doing, each his own task, in its highest and best way.

There undoubtedly is in much of the nervous wreckage in this hurrying age a good deal of sin behind the physical ill. Many in the congregations of the Church are haunted by torturing memories of some crookedness which brings distress either to

themselves or to some one much dearer. This torture may be inducing a state of tense physical mishap. To such people the sermon may bring help. If they know that they have done wrong, if they doubt how God views it all, if they are distressed almost to insanity, then they may remember the words of the exhortation to the Holy Communion in the Prayer Book: "If there be any of you, who . . . cannot quiet his own conscience, . . . but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other minister of God's Word, and open his grief: that he may receive such godly counsel and advice, as may tend to the quieting of his conscience and the removing of all scruple and doubtfulness." The preacher, from time to time, should remind the people of these words. Then if any person should take advantage of the opportunity, the clergyman would give what counsel and advice he could; then if the person wished it, the clergyman could bring him into the Church and there, in the sacred quiet, ask God to grant him forgiveness and peace.

There are others in great anguish whose

trouble has come through no fault of their own. Bereavement, failure of some sort, the cruelty of circumstances,—these are ways through which trouble comes to us. If there are any who think that God does not care, if they think that human sympathy has been removed, then these too may come and unfold their grief, and the clergyman will do what he can to assure them that God does care. It may be that he can tell them some word that shall give them peace.

Just here I should like to say a word in behalf of the public ministrations of the Church. Public services are first of all symbols of our loyalty to God. We worship Him in praise and prayer because it is our great gift to Him. After that, we come to Church to get help—help for our whole selves, especially our souls. There are prayers for those distressed and afflicted in mind, body, or estate. No service passes without the note of penitence, the seeking a new start, forgiveness for the past, hope for the future. These prayers sound often a little unreal to the fortunate and the self-complacent. They forget both themselves as they are, and also their troubled neighbours.

We kneel down, all together, to pray for our common needs and worries; not you for yours and I for mine; but you and I for both of us and all of us. It is common worship, common intercession. By a united pleading we make our souls ready to receive the most holy gift of God.

Into this service comes the sermon. It can be no perfunctory attempt to fill a conventional tradition. It must be the direct effort to give such counsel and advice as the preacher's knowledge of people leads him to believe that members of the congregation might like to ask. The word of warning is given because it may perhaps hold back one on the brink of sin. The word of comfort is given because, feeling vaguely in the dark, the preacher trusts that some one whom he may not suspect of needing it, will appropriate it. The word of exhortation is given because some one with his hand on a fine, hard task may receive the trifling impetus which will make him drive his plan to victory. The whole public service is a vital means for all who will seize it, to find the power of God.

There are many temptations which come

to vigorous clergymen to do the work which belongs to others. To take an interest in civic improvement does not mean that the minister shall leave his work and become, in any sense, however good, a ward politician. When Bishop Potter had preached his famous sermon on "God and the City" in old St. Paul's, New York, many laymen were so stirred that they gathered about him and bade him lead them on, then they would do a great civic reform. He flatly refused. He told them that it was their work, not his to organise such a movement. He had pointed the way. They saw their duty. He must do his own work. Nothing could more aptly illustrate the relation of the preacher to the other good men of a community. He does not and will not do work which he can get others to do, or which others are already doing. He will warn, exhort, plead. He will not leave his own high function. It is not for the best service of the community that he should.

When in a college town, a Sunday afternoon a good many years ago, I dropped into the college chapel. It was a beautiful chapel; the western sun flooded it with glory;

the young men filling it were reverent and alert; the college president, an unusually able man, was to preach. I was ready to be moved to do my duty with a keener zest, and I expected something worth while. To my astonishment the distinguished president spent his sermon time in congratulating the college that a new system of drainage had been completed. I was dazed, then indignant. Of course he ought to have seen to his drains—but not then. He threw away an opportunity to preach Christ to receptive men on a golden afternoon.

The Christian Church encourages all that tends to build up the life of man. It cares that the drainage be good, that politics be clean, that schools be sound, that laws be just, that health be maintained—but it finds its own work in insisting that those set to do these tasks do them well, and then in pointing all men to a higher goal than any of these excellent aims can reach. It calls to worship, stately and simple and real. It prays that the weary soul may find rest, that the worried may find peace, that the tempted may gain power to resist, that the inefficient may get impulse to do strong

work, that the sinful and discouraged may get hope to go forth and sin no more, that the selfish may gain love to do something for others. The Christian Church stands in the world with all the energy it can command to preach of God and His infinite Love, to preach of man and his infinite need, and then, in some way, to bring God and man together.

The preacher is not expected to do all the noble work in the world. He plays his part best if he warns all men to work as God's instruments, and then himself does his own peculiar work with intensive zeal. It is an age of specialists. The preacher cannot afford to scatter his energy, lest men forget what is his supreme privilege and duty. He must share his responsibility for the world's good with all who are able and willing to help. If his eyes are open he knows that the world is full of such people. Let him rejoice in them, and not attempt to duplicate their work, when the possibility of his own looms far beyond him with unguessed gifts of God to men.

4. An Efficient Guide

A sermon ought to be preached with a definite purpose. The preacher who goes about with a cynical smile, saying that sermons do no good whatever, invites his own uselessness. The true preacher dares to believe that, with God's help, his sermons make a difference to the people who hear them. They lift certain discouraged people out of despair. To others they make Christ real. Many an unselfish deed, seemingly impossible on Saturday, is done with a will on Monday, because the Sunday's sermon has come between.

It is quite true that the preacher does not know who will appropriate his counsel and his pleading. But, inasmuch as he conceives himself to be God's archer, he shoots his arrow into the air, and trusts God to carry it to its mark. Any man who has from five hundred to a thousand people to whom he may preach each Sunday has an opportunity for good which is unique. The man who can preach to fifty people has also a unique opportunity. The man who is content to bore, or simply to enter-

tain, a congregation, under such circumstances, is a thief—he is stealing the most precious time of a man's week. Plain, simple words, spoken with the avowed intention of making some difference in human lives, are the only words possible for an honest man. A preacher seeks to be an efficient guide.

Now and again the preacher receives the grateful news that some word that he has spoken in Church has made a new deed in the world. He preached one morning upon the need of Christian forgiveness, the need of the offended man's having it out with his blundering friend, before misunderstanding turned to contempt, silence, and hate—and some one, a year afterward, asked the preacher if he knew that when he preached that sermon a certain woman was about to turn aside from an old friend forever, and the sermon, showing her a way out of the trouble, gave her the impulse to forgive. That sermon saved a blessed friendship. The preacher preached another morning on the Christian's duty of making sacrifices to serve the city, the State, the Nation; and, on the way home from Church, the

Senior Warden told the Junior Warden that they ought to allow their names to come up before their ward as candidates for aldermen. The preacher heard of the conversation with surprise, because he had lacked faith in preaching; he also thanked God, and set about his next sermon with new courage. Again, the preacher urged that, without obtruding conversation upon the quiet after a service, parishioners take pains, by some sign or token, to let those sitting near them know that they were in the house of God as friends. The next day the preacher learned that a certain cold and haughty person had spoken a genial word of greeting to one ignored for years, though sitting hard by, through all that time. The preacher's word had gone home. Finally, when a young and chivalrous bishop died suddenly, and the diocese seemed irreparably poor because of his going, a rector spoke of his gallant life the following Sunday, and bade the boys of the parish remember that they must do what they could to grow up men, valiant and kind, to take his place. That night a mother said to her small boy as she kissed him good-night,

"Bobby, why were you so long saying your prayers?" She hardly knew why she asked, but his answer was quick and frank: "Because," he replied, "you know the rector said that now the bishop was gone, we must take his place. I was asking God to make me like the bishop." The preacher heard the story, and believed the more in the power of preaching.

These are all such instances, taken from common experience, as might be multiplied indefinitely. The stranger coming to preach in a parish—though he may preach, as the people say, more eloquently than the rector—can rarely have the same influence. It is because the preacher at home is a recognised guide, because in some mysterious way he gives the flock the impression that he is there to be their good shepherd and to lead them forth to duty and happiness, therefore it is that his homely words seem to them words that must be heeded. It is not in brilliancy of ideas or expression, but in the rigid determination to be vital and to try with all the might to help, that the preacher becomes an efficient guide.

So it is that a preacher must cultivate

in himself the expectation that his words are going to lead men forward to better things—not by a general cosy exaltation of spirit, but by a sharp impulse to do definite new acts. The fact that he has this expectation will put reality and vividness into his preparation. Men shall not say that his task is not practical. It is rather the most practical work the community sees. Others may add wings to buildings and make new furniture for them. He is adding new curves and rich spaces to character, filling life with a new content. He desires to hold men's attention, but he does not aim at cleverness. All he desires is to make the world of Monday, if by ever so little, different from the world of Saturday. He wishes his preaching to be not interesting, but vital. He aspires to be a true guide to the people whom he serves and loves.

5. A Friend

By the indescribable atmosphere of a sermon the preacher must give the impression that he holds himself ready to be the friend of any one who wants his friendship.

He may not thrust his friendship upon a man against the will of the man, for that involves contradiction of terms and is impossible, but he must be looking out into the hedges to see the lonely faces.

The minister belongs to every class. Being a member of every class he is set to be the friend of rich and poor, obscure and famous, bad and good, pompous and simple, silly and wise, pedants and fools. When the minister of Christ says that he cares just as much for the ignorant parishioner as for the learned, as much for the poor as for the rich, he is not schooling himself to say it. It is part of his discipleship to the Nazarene to *feel* it as well as to say it. These people are all in some way his. Other leaders may divide people into classes and draw distinctions,—he cannot. He not only does not wish to do so: it is impossible for him. How did the Man Christ Jesus treat men?—that is his measure. If splendour does not dazzle him, neither does barrenness appal him. Perhaps the man in the congregation to whom the rector's heart goes out has a million dollars, perhaps he has nothing but his daily wage. It is the man and his

affection and his need and his response—those are the elements that build up in the minister's heart the walls of friendship.

Sometimes, in loneliness or distress, people think their rector is more interested in one class of men than in another. The well-to-do are apt to think he cares only for the poor; and the poor are apt to think him only the rich man's friend. Of course, when death comes, and the pastor pushes back the doors of the hearts of his bereaved parishioners, rich and poor find out how much he truly cared for them all, as his dear friends, all the time. Of course he had called before; of course he had been pleasant and kind. But they did not know that he was their friend. That fact ought to be divulged as promptly as possible. People ought to know that outward trappings or the grateful freedom from them have little to do with a parson's heart. God's sunshine and the willingness to be friendly are the same in a king's palace and in the most remote cottage of the little village. Some way the sermon, as well as the daily walk through the parish, ought to tell the blessed fact. To proclaim it bluntly might seem a little

indelicate. But better so than that the people should not know. The man who has no friend ought to know where a friend can be found.

Sermons can be made to give symptoms of singular unfriendliness. Henry Alline was an American clergyman living at the time of the Revolution. One day he wrote in his diary, "On Wednesday the 12th, I preached at a wedding, and had the happiness thereby to be the means of excluding carnal mirth." It must have taken the bridegroom of that occasion some years to discover the friendly soul of the Reverend Henry Alline. So the scolding that sometimes issues from twentieth century pulpits cannot be said to raise the hopes of the new parishioner that the rector he finds in his new town will be as gentle and fatherly as the old rector he has left behind in his former home. Denunciation against evildoers may be so uncompromising as to give a sense of black despair to the penitent in the last pew, who has stolen in to see what the Gospel means in forgiveness and hope. The penitent surmises that he never would dare to take the stern denouncer into his

confidence, pour out his soul to him, and beg his friendship to aid him in standing upright for the future.

Worst of all is the atmosphere of self-complacency and selfishness that exhales from some sermons. The preacher, from a technical point of view, may be entertaining, clever, even amusing. Many people may praise his sermons. Yet there will be the feeling in the pews that the preacher is preening his feathers and is thinking of his own singing. The imputation may be wholly unjust. But to give such an impression is fatal to any true love which might go out to the hearers. No one would go to that man in trouble; no one would suspect that he would care to waste time in friendship, unless the friendship could bring advantage to him. One could admire, delight to hear—but never love. The barrier of selfishness—real or imagined—would be impassable.

One valid test of a good sermon is to ask whether it breathes friendship, whether it makes the members of the congregation feel that the rector cares for them individually. It is a subtle quality, going back

of all rules, certainly back of all professional intentions, reaching at last the warm and generous heart of a loving man. If a man really cares for men, if a man really wishes men to be his friends, then some way the preaching will tell the story. Many a preacher, called commonplace by the critics, has astonishing success. The success is apt to be deserved, for the man's homely, meagre sermons may assure people who have no satisfying friendships that if they ever should need a friend, the preacher could be trusted to give himself to them with unfaltering kindness, and with unquestioning immediateness. The man is a friend. That is all. And it is enough.

6. A Servant to Men

To be a true priest of God the minister must be anxious always to be a servant to men. When I say servant, I mean servant—one ready to do any task, however menial, if doing it will help a single soul. Being a servant is not poetry; it is the uncomeliest, plainest prose. Our Lord made it clear when He washed His disciples' feet. He

intended *His* men to find nobility only in service, whatever it might cost in pride or toil or life. In so far as clergymen, in the pulpit or on the street, allow themselves to have the point of view that they are to be anything but downright servants, in so far they must expect to fail in God's sight, whatever the world may say about it.

I recall a youth who came to me once to tell me that he wished to study for the ministry. I asked what had led him to such a decision. He answered that he had a good presence and he believed he had gifts of oratory. Of course that was an absurd, conceited speech; but the worst of it was that it revealed a wholly inadequate ambition. Had he only said, "I see what a hard time people have—I want to help with all my might," then, though he stumbled and stuttered, I could have said, "Come." One more often finds people feeling the appeal to the ministry, but lamenting that they fear they could not be diplomatic administrators or preach eloquent sermons. Skillful administration and great preaching are not the things to be worried about. At best they are always subsidiary. Some men pos-

sessing them may seem to the discreet to fail to spread the loving news of Christ. What is demanded, first of all and above all, is the consuming desire to help, to help every day, to help with all the mind and soul and heart, to be a real servant to men.

A common evasion of the principle, a squint as it were from the right point of view, is the effort to explain that we are ministers of Christ, not of men. I blush to repeat such sophistry. We are both, or neither. Our Master has certainly made that clear: "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Another common evasion is the attempt to command a respect for the office which one would not ask for oneself as an individual. No such sensitive official of the Church can ever possess men's love, for it is only the meek who possess the earth, and there are no exceptions. I do not include in the meek any of the Uriah Heap clan. I mean the meek, who are meek within. A man performing the duties of his office is himself, and he cannot separate his official and his personal selves. If he is efficient his office fits him better than the

closest-fitting glove fits the hand it covers. The man so eager to help that he cares not a fig for the way people ask it, the man so joyous in helping that he never notices that respect toward him has been lacking, the man so absorbed in helping that he forgets whether anyone gave him the credit for it, he is the man to whom men tie, in darkness and doubt and despair. They come running to him, for they know that he thinks of but one thing, "How can I help?" He is as the harbour to the little ships fretted by the storm. He is the shelter of troubled men.

The advice is given to young men that they must not waste their time on little tasks. Sometimes the advice is put into the form of a proverb, and reads somewhat like this: "Don't waste five-dollar time on fifty-cent jobs." The longer I am a minister the more convinced I am that there are no "fifty-cent jobs" in the ministry. The unwise may call them so, but if they manifest a determination to serve to the uttermost they adequately fill time with deeds for which all the jewels of kings could not pay. It is a man's meekness and patience in little

things that test the quality of a ministry. The true servant to men does not mind if he goes to a house when some one is ill and he is besought to run for a bit of medicine which the doctor needs at once. Though he be archbishop, he runs without question. Instinctively he does the service which is immediate. He thinks neither of his dignity nor of the more important way he might be spending his time. To serve, to serve instantly, is his priestly character. Most people can do conspicuous duties fairly well if the opportunity comes to them. Only great souls can do the little duties with unfailing courage and dash.

Often one finds in a small parish startling efficiency. The numerous trifling details all move with the order of clockwork. Their combined harmony gives dignity to what might seem a difficult and insignificant post. Looking for the secret, one finds it in the rector. He is everywhere. In any voluntary organisation men are constantly failing to do what they promise to do. When any fall out, the rector some way finds time to do their work as well as his own. He puts all to work, so far as he can, but, by

strange activity, the unfaithfulness of workers, here and there, seems never to leave gaps. The rector is ready to do the little things. He is not afraid to be a servant.

Probably there lurks in the background of many a young clergyman's ambition the question whether he will be able to do rather unusual tasks and to do them rather marvellously well. The trouble with this ambition is that it is not ambitious enough. The only ambition worth having is the ambition by day and by night, from winter to winter all the years, to help people, to find that nothing is too trifling or too troublesome, if by it the man may convey to his fellow-townsmen the conviction that he intends to be a servant, a humble, energetic servant, a servant to all men, and therefore —and therefore only—a servant to the Lord Jesus Christ.

This attitude of servant ought to pervade a man's whole ministry. Doing so, it will inevitably find its way into his sermons. With no meeching syllables, with the dignity of a free man, with the greatness of Christ upon him, the preacher will declare that he is a servant. He will not need to watch

his dignity. The poor thing will be tended by other hands than his; and it will rise to great heights. Only men will not call it dignity. They will call it love.

7. Standing Together Before God

Everyone knows that there cannot be a sermon without a congregation. In some divine and beautiful way the congregation stand about the preacher as he prepares his sermon, and they, for the most part, write it. If a man has ever tried to write a Christmas sermon during the August holiday, he knows what an absurd thing is produced, even if anything will come at all. The congregation five months away is too vague and distant to conjure up his sermon. It must be the image of their present needs which will stir him to give a message to them. Imagination must have accurate material to draw upon. It may not construct itself for a future too remote. The preacher and the congregation must preach the sermon together.

Whence, then, comes the sermon? Let me speak quickly, for we all know the answer.

The sermon, if it is a sermon, is invariably from God. It is God's message through the preacher, inspired by the congregation, which thus comes to be a sermon not for the congregation only, but for the preacher as well. He has something to do with it; the congregation has more; God has most.

An advantage maintained by so-called *ex tempore* preachers for their method, is that the preacher who can look always into the faces of the people, finds there the indication of what he ought to say, the impulse to say it. I have no doubt of it. Only the power of the congregation to give that sublime help is not limited to twenty minutes Sunday morning, and twenty minutes Sunday night. Nor is it confined to such times as the people may be in the parson's actual vision. It is enough that they are thinking of him, and he of them. It is enough that all through the parish they are, in a true sense, standing with him hour by hour in the presence of God, trying to serve Him, willing to learn, one from the other, how to serve Him better.

It was a high moment in a clergyman's life when one of the devout men of his con-

gregation told him that in the instant of silence before the sermon began he always prayed that the sermon might be God's word to the people. Wherever the sermon is taken seriously—and I believe that it is taken seriously in most congregations—I have no doubt such a prayer goes up from many faithful parishioners, perhaps not always consciously, but none the less really. And in spite of halting thought and cumbersome expression, I believe that God answers the prayer.

Part of the effectiveness of a sermon is the trust of the parishioners that they are to receive through it some message from God. That expectation is as the knocking at the door; the promise of the Gospel is fulfilled—the door is opened, and God's voice is heard. Such expectation and confidence have given many a man the courage to yield himself to God, that God may use him as He will. Many a preacher discouraged over his sermons yet yearning to make them alive with power, has received the impulse and the capacity to do what he longs to do, through the revelation of what some well-tried and magnanimous soul

in his congregation has believed that he could do. That belief, bold in its daring, is God speaking through the parishioner to the preacher. Such a parishioner can never be forgotten by any minister who once has felt the cheer and the inspiration of the divine hope, which, through God's direct quickening, becomes practically a command. The preacher falls upon his knees, humbly, yet with assurance. He gives himself to God as never before. The next Sunday he is enabled to help beyond his highest dreams—only he himself had little to do with it. God used him for His own purposes. Yet God was not willing to act alone. The preacher and the people *allowed* God to do it; that was the secret of it. The preacher and the people stood together before God.

Vital preaching depends more upon the will, the purpose, and the sincerity of a man's character than upon his mental attainments. Clever people can make brilliant orations, enthralling thousands. Only good people can preach sermons that will help anyone. The goodness which these people must have

is not an insipid innocence, but has qualities of positive excellence. These qualities are all such as any well-intentioned and stable soul can acquire. They display themselves largely in the attitude which a preacher takes to his congregation. Let us pray, therefore, that the clergy of our time, as they look up and down the busy streets, may have large and strengthening sympathy for men who falter and stumble; that they may clap their hands for joy because noble men of other callings find their vocations sacred, and bring their tasks to lay beside the Christian ministry as varied and holy offerings to God. Let us pray that the clergy of our time be self-forgetful friends and servants of all men, hurrying into sad streets and lonely villages, winning at first indulgent smiles of surprise or amusement, but winning in the end the tears of overwhelming love. In the intensity of their servanthood may they be ignorant of all disastrous toys, called wordly success and fame and ecclesiastical dignity. If perchance such toys fall into their laps may God keep them from playing with them. May one thought fasten upon all their work

—the conviction that joy is, by their service, growing in the world. Let us pray that the clergy of our time stand with the flocks that God has given them to receive from the Lord Christ the exalted gift of Himself; so that, when minister and people go out into the world to do their several tasks, men will remember only that when they came Christ seemed to enter to take away all misery.

Men everywhere, whether or not they know it, are hungry for the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the preacher's lot to manifest Him in sympathy, in help, in love, to those whose need is great. May the preacher's life be opened wide to Christ, that Christ may be enshrined in him. May the preacher dream of such labour and sacrifice as he never has read in any book save one. May the preacher risk his dreams for a wonderful future. May he be as Christ to the world of his time.

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